Report

CHILD IN CARE REVIEW

1987

to the Minister
of Social Services
for Saskatchewan

C H I L D I N C A R E

R E V I E W R E P O R T

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April 1987

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Child in Care Review resulted from the department's recognition of the importance of services to children in care and the concerns which have been expressed as to the ability of these services to meet the needs of children and their families. The achievement of the project is however attributable to the many people, foster parents and departmental staff who have generously shared their skills, knowledge and support during the past 12 months.

The Saskatchewan Foster Parents Association and its members have made major contributions to the review. The strong support of provincial board members, who encouraged foster parent participation in review meetings and in completion of questionnaires, is greatly appreciated.

Similarly, the commitment of departmental staff, including management and workers in the Family Support and Rehabilitation Services Divisions, has been invaluable. The team appreciates the time and effort they contributed to the review.

A special "thank you" is extended to the 44 young people who responded positively to the review team's request for interviews. Their willingness to share their experience and insight, as well as their suggestions to improve the child in care system are vital to the review.

The team is grateful to Don Fairbairn, Department of Social Services, for his extensive work with us in preparation of questionnaires and data analysis. Janet Campbell, Faculty of Social Work, was also most helpful in procuring relevant material from the current literature.

Team members also wish to acknowledge the contribution of their families, whose support during the team's travels was so important.

Finally, many thanks to our colleagues in the department who assumed the ongoing work of team members which enabled us to participate on the review.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The basic structure of Saskatchewan's child in care programs has been in place for some thirty years. However, the environment in which these programs operate has been in a state of rapid and continuous change.

Massive technological, economic and social changes have had an impact upon families and their communities. Technology has forever changed the home and the workplace. Television has brought the world into the home and created new expectations and pressures for family members. This period has seen more women entering the workforce. There has also been a notable shift in the population from rural to urban living.

These changes have had a profound effect on individuals and families. The extended family and neighbourhood are no longer readily available to provide support and assistance to families. Traditional values and lifestyles have been challenged. There has been an increase in separation and divorce rates and larger numbers of one parent and blended families.

New expectations, problems and stresses on the family, the child's primary caregiving unit, have emerged. Where once many problems would have been managed within the family or community, parents are turning to social services for help in responding to the needs of their children.

Society, as a whole, has identified some specific problems to which a range of responses are possible. Some primary examples of the issues are day care, child abuse and family violence. The value of familial and cultural heritage is of increasing importance to many people.

The emerging societal emphasis on the rights of individuals and families, as reflected in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, has increased the demand for services and scrutiny of services provided.

In Saskatchewan, the Ombudsman has displayed a strong interest in the standards and provision of services to children in care. He has expressed deep concern regarding what he perceives as a lack of adequate care for children. His belief is that staffing and resourcing levels are inadequate.

As a result of these many factors, a decision was made to review the child in care program and delivery system.

2.0 PURPOSE OF REVIEW

The child in care review was undertaken to determine child care program direction, resources and services required to meet the short and long term needs of children in care and the organizational structure and supports essential to provide a comprehensive service to children in care.

Review objectives, as stated in the terms of reference, were to:

i) ascertain the degree to which existing services and resources meet the regular and specialized needs of children in care and their capacity to meet projected needs
ii) identify deficiencies in program, practice and organizational structure which may exist and propose more effective alternatives
iii) priorize issues and put forward recommendations for future program development with appropriate action plans.

3.0 BACKGROUND

To enable a greater understanding of the review findings and recommendations, the review team has identified some key issues and developments in the wider scope of child and family services. They have had a strong impact on the child in care program which is an integral component of family support services.

Historically, the development of foster care services in Saskatchewan is parallel with that of other jurisdictions throughout North America. Foster care services of thirty and more years ago were based upon altruism and the concept of substitute families for children who could not remain with their own families.

The focus of child welfare services was on protection of the child. While family reunification was also a goal, there was often little in the way of support services to families to achieve this goal. The approach to foster care was based upon separation between foster and natural parents which inhibited reuniting children with their families. Thus, many children remained in care for extended periods and often became permanent wards.

Adoption was the preferred approach to achieve continuity and stability of care for infants and young children who were permanent wards. Prior to and during the sixties, there were often more children, including infants, awaiting adoption than potential adoptive parents. Therefore, many of these children grew up in foster care, often in a series of homes.

In 1967, the department undertook a major initiative to place children with special needs, including older children, for adoption. Concurrently, the number of infants relinquished for adoption began to decline. As the number of potential adoptive parents began to exceed the number of infants waiting for adoptive homes, a gradual reversal of the situation occurred.

During the same period, the department's approach to working with troubled families was undergoing transformation. Society was placing a renewed emphasis upon the family, its importance in caring for children and the need to support them in this task. Departmental services also began to place greater stress upon preventing children from entering care and upon family reunification if in care placement was necessary. The Family Services Act 1973 was considered enlightened and advanced legislation. It was the first child welfare legislation in Canada to provide for the

development of preventive services.

The redirection of family services led to the development of preventive services and greater use of care by voluntary agreement. Although the family support approach commenced in the 1970's, no major change was discernable until the 1980's when teen parent, parent aide and other in home support services were established.

The combination of the family support approach and efforts to achieve greater permanence for children in long term care have had an impact upon the child in care population. The total number of children decreased by 35% between the years 1970 and 1985. In 1970, 75% of all children in care were permanent wards; but, by 1985 this number had been reduced to 46%. The larger percentage of children were in voluntary or temporary care, and the goal for the majority of these children was return to their families.

For many years the department has recognized that the numbers of Indian and native children in care was disproportionate to the provincial population. In 1975, 58% of the children in care were of Indian or native origin. In recent years, a number of initiatives were undertaken to address this issue including funding of Indian and native family support services, increasing emphasis on working with the extended families and working with bands to recruit foster and adoptive homes. Notwithstanding these efforts, the percentage of Indian and native children in care increased to approximately 68% by 1985. However the increase in the number of Indian and native placement resources during this time period was negligible.

Indian bands and native organizations have expressed their desire to undertake their own child and family services. They are at various levels of readiness to provide their own services. Some organizations are at an early problem identification stage, and a minority are actively working with the department to assume direct service delivery. Apart from representations by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, very few Indian bands have given the department an indication of their wishes in this regard.

In spite of the various issues and trends that have emerged, no major revision to child in care programs has occurred. Some individual initiatives were however undertaken to improve planning, compensation, service delivery and care of children.

One of the developments in the mid-1970's was the establishment of Child Care and Family Service Planning Committees. These were developed to ensure appropriate

planning for all children in care or at risk of coming into care. The concept was innovative and the objectives laudable, but the inherent problems were not overcome. The committees have ceased to function in most areas of Saskatchewan.

Various payment systems to compensate foster parents for specialized services provided to children in their care have been attempted. The current fee for service system is based upon the needs of the child rather than upon the skills and competence of the foster parent.

The Saskatchewan Foster Parent Association, established in 1974, and the department have endeavoured to promote public recognition of fostering to strengthen recruitment and support of foster parents, as well as to provide orientation and training. Notwithstanding these efforts, the number of foster parents has declined from an estimated 1,124 in 1976 to 726 in March of 1986.

To respond to some specific needs, several family-based special resource programs were developed. The development of these resources was to augment institutional care for youth who require assessment, stabilization or treatment. The Parent Therapist homes in Saskatoon, Transitional Adolescent Parenting (TAPS) home, and the special treatment home concept in Melfort have, however, remained isolated and have not been expanded to become part of a planned continuum of resources across the province.

Child caring agencies have always experienced difficulty in developing appropriate resources to meet the needs of youth. Some natural parents also appear overwhelmed and less likely to tolerate the youth who is in conflict with the values and expectations of the family. They more frequently turn to the department for assistance. The majority of foster parents are reluctant to take troubled teenagers into their homes. This unwillingness has also been displayed by the public in the negative reaction to the development of resources for troubled youth in their communities.

The foster care system has long been the mainstay of the child care service, with a large majority of children receiving care in foster homes. The foster care services have, however, been supported by a range of other resources developed to care for children for whom foster care is not appropriate. These resources have included a combination of group homes and institutional resources. The services have been provided by both the department and non-government agencies. The non-government two principal agencies providing residential care in the province have been Ranch Ehrlo and Bosco Homes in Regina. Group homes for

adolescents are located throughout the province.

Prior to 1984 departmental residential services included Dales House, Roy Wilson Centre and Paul Dojack Centre in Regina, Kilburn Hall, Saskatoon, and Cottage 22 in Prince Albert.

Since the Young Offenders Act was implemented in April, 1984, there has been a marked decrease in the number of departmental resources available for children and youth within the family services program. The Roy Wilson Centre has been closed, Paul Dojack Centre and Kilburn Hall have been fully transferred to the Young Offenders program while the Young Offender population at Dales House ranges from 60 to 80%.

The loss of these institutions has had a major impact upon the child in care program and the department's ability to meet the needs of children placed in care.

The department has once again turned to its traditional base, that of foster care. The recognition by both the department and the S.F.P.A. of the high level of expectation and the work load placed upon foster parents was basic to undertaking this joint review.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

A child in care review team was established to conduct the review. The team consisted of six members. The department's Program Manager, Adoption Services, was seconded for approximately a year, beginning in December of 1985, and served as the team leader. A District Supervisor and a Regional Family Services Program Manager were seconded to the team on a full time basis for five months, and part time for other periods during the review. Two foster parents, representing the Saskatchewan Foster Parents Association (S.F.P.A.), were part time members of the team throughout the process as was the Program Manager, Residential Services. Consultation with the Director, Child in Care Services, occurred throughout the process.

Initially, the review team delineated the scope of the review (subject to the terms of reference), the target group, the specific areas to be addressed and the methodology. Statistical data on the children in care, as provided by the department's Systems Branch, was used in the process.

The terms of reference designated the target population as children in foster home and group home care. The team also included children in care living with relatives, in room and board situations or at home due to lack of appropriate resources. The sample was drawn from approximately 82% of the total in-care child population. Excluded were children in residential and treatment centres, in adoption homes, on apprehended status for less than 30 days, and 16 - 17 year olds with whom the department has voluntary agreements.

The review team determined the content of the various questionnaires and interviews. Full time team members then developed these documents, also using materials gleaned from other research as appropriate.

There was discussion and consultation with the full team membership throughout the developmental stages. A research officer from Strategic Planning and Communication Branch assisted the team with the design of the questionnaires and other developmental aspects of the review.

The team believed the total commitment and involvement of all foster parents and all child care staff were essential to this review. Therefore, once the parameters had been established and developmental work on review instruments was underway, the Director, Child in Care Services, the team leader and foster parent representatives met with the provincial board of the S.F.P.A. The focus of the meeting

was to provide information regarding review content and process, and to enlist the active support of the board members in promoting the fullest possible participation of all foster parents. Similar meetings were also held with departmental district management groups.

Appendix A identifies the activities undertaken by the team and completion dates.

The review team concluded that to fulfil its mandate, the focal point of the review had to be the needs of the children in care. Thus it was necessary to gather information that would describe the children and their needs, identify existing resources and services to meet these needs as well as the gaps and deficiencies in service. A profile of the children in care was, therefore, critical.

A questionnaire was designed for completion by the children's social workers to obtain specific information on who the children are, why they are in care, where they are living, what problems they are experiencing and answers to other pertinent questions . This questionnaire was completed on 694 children, who were randomly selected and who represented about 40% of the target population. These questionnaires were mailed to district staff at the end of March, 1986 for completion by mid-April.

To gain more in depth information on the children, their natural and foster families, their placement history, as well as departmental services and records, a file review was conducted on 15% (101) of the worker questionnaire sample.

The review team also wished to obtain first hand information from the various parties involved. Of the sample of 101 child in care files, interviews were requested with all children aged 12 and over, their natural parents (if still involved with the child), their foster parents and their social workers. This included about 50% of the file review sample.

A broad base of foster parent input was necessary for a thorough review. Two mechanisms were used to collect views of foster parents on needs of the children and foster families, how well these are being met, problems in the system and suggestions for improvements. First, meetings (16) were held with Saskatchewan Foster Parents Association local groups throughout the province. Schedules and agenda were sent to all locals in March. Second, an anonymous questionnaire was sent to all foster parents in the province. Of 799 questionnaires distributed, 519 (65%) were completed and returned. These questionnaires were mailed in June of

1986. The majority of returns had been received by the end of July.

1.

Departmental staff views and recommendations regarding needs of children, foster families and workers were also sought. This was done by means of staff meetings (12) in various district locations. Again, schedules and agenda were sent to all offices in March.

The meetings with district staff and foster parent groups, the file reviews and the interviews with children, natural parents, foster parents and staff were conducted simultaneously as the team moved throughout the province. All of these were completed in the April-June time frame.

The team leader was present at all staff and foster parent meetings, with one exception when other team members substituted. The two foster parent representatives alternated their participation at meetings. One of the two representatives attended each foster parent and staff meeting, with only a few exceptions due to special circumstances. The Executive Director, S.F.P.A., attended several meetings as well. The other team members conducted the file reviews and interviews. The two foster parents conducted some interviews with foster parents, as time permitted, with the team leader doing some file reviews.

Through the summer and fall, the data collected from questionnaires and file reviews was computerized. Information gathered through all meetings and interviews was compiled manually by some team members, with the assistance of the Executive Director, S.F.P.A. in tabulating results of foster parent meetings. Analysis of all this data is continuing. However, the major findings are included in this report and represent the conclusions drawn by the review team to date.

The department also contracted with the Social Administration Research Unit, Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina for completion of a literature review.

The literature review consisted of searching out recently published material from across North America and Great Britain pertaining to child in care services, with a special emphasis on foster care. This included a review of related research that has been undertaken, findings that add to the current knowledge base and direction for child in care programs and services, information on educational programs developed for foster parents and staff and related areas. While this literature review was not fully completed until the summer of 1986, some of the information identified early in the process assisted the team in developmental

aspects of review instruments. In addition the literature review will be of value in all aspects of further program and service development.

Among the 694 children selected were 29 permanent wards in Regina and area, who were transferred to Rehabilitation Services Division in 1984. This was established as a pilot project to determine if Rehabilitation Services Division could better serve the severely handicapped children in care. The entire group was included in the sample for later comparison with similar children in other districts continuing under the supervision of child care workers.

The team recognizes this review is not exhaustive and that numerous areas require further research, analysis and development. Given the time and other constraints, the instruments and mechanisms used to gather information could not be pretested and developed to the degree desired. However, the information gathered via the several mechanisms consistently identified numerous themes and gaps in services.

A vast amount of information was collected and is still being compiled. Major findings from all information sources are being utilized in this report.

5.0 PROFILES

5.1 Profile of Children

The profile of children which follows is based on the sample of 694 children selected at random.

The age groupings of children in the sample are included in the following table:

Table 1

Age Groups of Children in the Worker Questionnaire Sample

Age Range	Number	Percentage
0 - 5	164	23.7%
6 - 11	184	26.6%
12 - 15	245	35.4%
16 - 17	99	14.3%
18*	1	.1%

* Child turned 18 at about the time of sample selection.

About 50% of the children are between the ages of 12 and 17, which is consistent with the total child in care population.

Overall, 42% of these children are of status Indian origin, 26% are non-status or Metis and 32% are of other origin. There is significant variation among districts as to the percentage of children by racial origin. For example, in the Prince Albert/La Ronge district, 53% of children in care are status Indian and 36% are non-status/ Metis. At the other end of the spectrum, the Moose Jaw/ Swift Current child in care population shows 20% status Indian, 9% non-status/ Metis and 71% other.

Eighty-two per cent (82%) of the children live in foster homes while another 6% live with relatives, some of which are approved foster homes, 4% of the children are in group homes, 2% are in room and board situations, 1% in Parent Therapist or Transitional Adolescent Parenting (TAPS) homes, and 1% with their parents. Four percent (4%) of the children are in private placements, with friends, or whose whereabouts at the time are not known.

Gender of the children is also consistent with the overall

population of children in care, in that 46% are female, 54% are male.

Of the 171 girls between the ages of 12 and 17 years in the worker questionnaire sample, 17 (10%) are pregnant or had been pregnant at some time. Thirteen (13) pregnancies had resulted in birth of a child and of these, in ten (10) instances the baby was in the mother's care.

In the worker questionnaire, data was gathered to determine how many children in care have siblings in care. This information follows in Table 2.

Table 2

Children in Care by Whether They Have Siblings in Care

Number of Siblings In Care	Number of Children*	Percentage
0	286	42.4%
1	159	23.6%
2	132	19.6%
3	51	7.6%
4	30	4.5%
5	9	1.3%
6	2	.3%
7	5	.7%
Total	674	100 %

* Although 694 worker questionnaires were completed, 20 were not keypunched at the time these tabulations were done.

Of the sample, 12% of the children are in care by means of a voluntary agreement, 11% are on apprehended status (i.e., the matter being before the court), 16% are temporary wards, 53% permanent wards and 3% are wards of other provinces. Overall, 6.8% of the children were previously adopted.

Children in care have the same basic needs as do all children. However, by the very fact they are separated from their natural families, usually because of problems experienced within their families, children in care have additional and special needs. For example, physical neglect is the primary reason for admission to care for 30% of the children in the sample, and a secondary reason for another 21%. Sexual exploitation is either the primary or secondary

reason for care for 9.3% of the children. Fifteen percent (15%) of the children were physically abused and, therefore, in care. Sixteen percent (16%) of the children are in care totally or partly due to parent-child conflict.

Detailed information on specific problems the children are experiencing and the degree of difficulty experienced (i.e., little, moderate or major difficulty) was gathered through the worker questionnaire. The problem areas and number of children experiencing these problems are tabulated in Appendix B.

With regard to the 29 severely handicapped children who are part of the Rehabilitation Services Division pilot project, further comparison with other children with similar problems is required. Because the team reviewed the entire group of 29 children with severe handicaps, this group is slightly over-represented in the profiles.

Of the 694 children in the sample, 117 (17%) were assessed as not having any unusual or special needs. The remaining 577 (83%) children have special needs. On average, each is experiencing three to four specific problems.

In summary, the most notable characteristics of the child in care population are the high proportion who are of Indian and native ancestry and the high percentage of adolescents. The majority of children in care also have specialized needs which must be met through the resources and services of the community and government.

5.2 Profile of Natural Parents

The review was not designed to provide a comprehensive profile of the natural parents of children in care. However, it provides some basic information which has relevance for family support services while the child is in care and following the childs return home.

The following table identifies the family structure of the primary caregiver(s) in the six months prior to the child's current admission to care. This information was obtained from the worker questionnaire.

Table 3

Child's Primary Caregiver in the Six Months Prior to Entry to Care

	Female Alone	Male Alone	Two Parent	Total
Natural Family	42.6%	3.8%	24 %	70.4%
Blended Family*	.1%	--	10 %	10.1%
Adoptive Family	--	.3%	4.6%	4.9%
Extended Family	4.7%	.3%	4.3%	9.3%
Other	.8%	.2%	4.3%	5.3%
TOTAL	48.2%	4.6%	47.2%	100 %

*Includes step-parent and common law situations

Data from the file review on occupations and income levels of mothers and fathers must be tablulated before a more complete picture will emerge.

From data presently, available it would appear that the predominant problem experienced by both legal mother and father was that of alcohol abuse. Fully 50% of the sample exhibited this problem, far outweighing other factors such as substance abuse, mental health problems or other handicapping conditions.

5.3 Profile of Foster Parents

To develop a profile of the foster parent resource base in Saskatchewan, information was drawn from the foster parent questionnaire and file review. The number of respondents in all age categories in the questionnaire closely resembles the age breakout in the total foster parent population, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Percentage of Foster Parents by Age Group

AGE GROUPS	Respondents		All Departmental Foster Parents *	
	Foster Mother %	Foster Father %	Foster Mother %	Foster Father %
18 - 24 yrs.	1.4%	1.2%	1.8%	1.2%
25 - 31 yrs.	13.8	8.1	13.1	8.6
32 - 38 yrs.	21.0	20.0	22.6	18.7
39 - 45 yrs.	25.8	22.7	23.7	21.2
46 - 52 yrs.	17.3	18.7	19.5	22.9
53 - 59 yrs.	13.4	15.7	11.5	14.9
60 yrs. of age or older	7.9	13.7	7.8	12.6

* These percentages are based on information in the departmental Client Index.

In terms of marital status, 13% of the respondents are single parents and 87% are two parent families.

With regard to educational levels, 50% of foster mothers and 57% of foster fathers have less than a complete high school graduation level. Nineteen percent (19%) and 13% respectively are high school graduates, 21% and 18% have training beyond high school, while 10% and 12% are university graduates or have post graduate degrees.

The employment status of foster parent respondents is included in Table 5.

Table 5

Employment Status of Foster Parents

	Foster Mother	Foster Father
Self Employed	8.2%	29.3%
Self Employed Part Time	5.1%	4.5%
Full Employment	9.5%	47.4%
Part Time Employment	12.1%	3 %
Homemaker	58.4%	.2%
Unemployed	1.2%	2.7%
Disabled	1 %	2.7%
Retired	2 %	8.4%
Other	2.5%	1.8%

For those foster parents who required child care because they work outside the home, 5.4% utilize day care centres or family day care homes, 49% utilize a sitter in the home, 30% a sitter outside the home while the remaining 16% make other arrangements.

Information regarding total family income in foster parent households(excluding foster care payments), indicates 23% earn less than $12,000 per year, 43% earn between $12,000 and $24,000, 24% earn between $24,000 and $36,000, and in 10% of the homes there is a combined income of more than $36,000 per annum.

Table 6 describes the location of current foster parents.

Table 6

Location of Foster Parents in

Comparison with Location of

Family Households in Saskatchewan

	Respondents to Foster Parent Questionnaire		Family Households (Statistics Canada)*
Regina/Saskatoon	30.6%		32.5%
Other Cities	12.6%		16 %
Towns/Villages	24.8%	)	
Rural, Farm and		)	51.5%
Unincorporated areas	32.0%	)	
	100.0%		100.0%

*Estimates of families for Canada and the Provinces, April, 1982, Statistics Canada Publication.

The length of time in which the respondents have been foster parents is described in Table 7.

Table 7

Length of Time as Foster Parents

	Foster Mother 510 Responses	Foster Father 435 Responses
Less Than 6 months	2.9%	2.8%
6 months - 1 yr.	4.9%	5.5%
1 yr. - 3 yr.	13.5%	14.2%
3 yrs. - 5 yrs.	13.7%	13.8%
5 yrs. - 10 yrs.	22.8%	23.7%
10 yrs. - 20 yrs.	31.0%	29 %
20 years or more	11.2%	11 %

According to the file review sample, only 16% of the foster mothers and 19% of the foster fathers are of Indian or native racial origin compared with 79% foster mothers and 74% foster fathers who are of caucasian extraction. This is reversal of the racial origin of children in care.

In summary, the portrait of the foster parent population indicates that more than 70% are of caucasian background and over 50% are under the age of 45 years. Some 43% reside in urban areas and the remainder live in towns, villages or rural areas. In excess of 66% of the families indicate their family income, excluding foster care payments, is less than $24,000 per year.

5.4 Profile of Staff

The management and delivery of services to children in care is provided mainly through a staff of some 95 workers and 20 supervisors in a system of eight District and twelve sub offices.

Departmental records indicate that 70% of the supervisors have a Bachelor of Social Work (B.S.W.) or Master of Social Work (M.S.W.) degree. Of the line staff, 38% have a B.S.W. or M.S.W. A total of 59% of the total supervisor and worker group have some formal social work training; this includes Certificates in Social Work and Social Service Worker

Certificates. The remaining 41% have qualifications which range from grade XII with related experience, nursing, teaching, theology, to those with other Bachelor-level degrees.

These staff are not all fully deployed to child in care services. The geographic and demographic nature of the province has led to the establishment of a diversified delivery system which results in a variation in staff functions. For example, in addition to responsibilities in all family services programs, some supervisors may also be charged with duties regarding financial assistance and services to young offenders, in addition to the expectation that they be familiar with and responsive to non-government organization (N.G.O.) services in their area. Workers may be responsible for all child and family services as well as young offenders cases. In a number of instances, child in care services is not the primary, but rather a secondary role for the staff member.

The length of experience of the sample of workers interviewed, regarding children age 12 and over, is outlined in Table 8 below.

Table 8

Staff Experience Profile

	Length of Time With Dept. of Social Services	Length of Time in Family Services	Length of Time in Child Care
Less than 1 yr.	3	6	8
1 - 3 yrs.	11	12	15
3 - 5 yrs.	3	4	4
5 - 10 yrs.	10	4	4
More than 10 yrs.	10	8*	5
Other	--	3*	1**
TOTAL	37	37	37

* Three workers have never worked in family services
** One worker was not a child care worker

With regard to gender, 75% of social workers responsible for child in care services are female and 25% are male. In the supervisory group, two-thirds are male and one-third are female.

6.0 SERVICES TO CHILDREN

Given the profiles of children, natural families, foster parents and staff, the following sections will provide an assessment of the current ability to meet the specialized needs of children in care.

Several facts are crucial to this assessment. They are:

- fully 50% of the sample group are 12 years of age or older;
- 68% of the children are of Indian or native ancestry;
- close to 50% are in temporary care and the remaining children are permanent wards;
- some 57% of the children also have siblings in care;
- 82% of the children are in foster homes.

6.1 Admissions to Care and Placement Stability

The worker questionnaire indicated that 57% of the 694 children reviewed have been admitted to care on more than one occasion. The review of 101 files disclosed that nearly half the children have experienced several admissions to care. Twelve percent (12%) have two admissions; 17% have three admissions; 9% have four admissions; and 5% of the group have five or more admissions.

Stability of care and relationships is not always accomplished within departmental care either. The same file reviews identified that 20 children have experienced one placement; 39 children between two and four placements; 33 have had five to ten placements, while nine had from 11 to 16 or more placements. Some of these moves were due to children being returned home and coming back into care. In addition, children entering care on a crisis basis must usually be placed in a receiving home prior to placement in another foster home, thus adding to the number of placements.

In conclusion, the team believes a well-adjusted child would have a very difficult time maintaining a sense of self-worth and positive relationships given all these moves. For the children coming into care who have already experienced family breakdown, separation and loss, the lack of stability within care causes further damage.

6.2 Special Needs

As stated in the section profiling the children, the majority of children in care are experiencing problems due to their special needs. Many have more than one special problem area. The degree to which these needs can be met is dependant upon the services and placement resources available within the community.

The listing of children's special needs and problem areas in Appendix B shows the variations by age group of children. For example, a larger percentage of preschool children have congenital conditions causing problems than in other age groups. However, in areas such as depression, suicidal tendencies, alcohol and other substance abuse the percentage increases as children approach and enter adolescence. Another example relates to children who are victims of sexual abuse. In the preschool group, 3% are experiencing problems as a result of sexual abuse. The percentage increases to 13% of the children in the 6 to 15 year age group.

Problems related to cultural or linguistic differences are evident for 13% of youth under 16 years of age. Learning disabilities are in evidence for 30% of 6 to 11 year olds with a gradual reduction in older groups. The fact that nearly 50% of youth age 12 to 15 years have problems with self-esteem is also significant.

The areas listed above are but a few examples. In conjunction with the identification of problems the children are experiencing, the worker questionnaire elicited responses as to which needs are only partially or not being met at present.

The consistent thread of unmet need through all age ranges is in emotional and behavioural problems. Depression, lack of self esteem and violent, aggressive or destructive behaviours are identified from the 0 to 5 years age group through to the age of majority. Workers indicate additional interventions are required for all age groups.

Problems related to sexuality are noted for many children. Children may encounter problems in their search for sexual identity or exhibit inappropriate behavior leading to promiscuity or sexual assault. Staff responses indicate that needs in this sensitive area are not being sufficiently met with any age group of children. Both staff and foster parents identified a need for training in this area.

Victims of sexual abuse are identified in all age groups. Of the 694 children in the sample, 75 (10.8%) are experiencing some degree of problems related to previous sexual abuse. Current services of the department, other departments and community agencies are inadequate to meet the needs. During meetings, staff and foster parents also expressed strong views regarding the need for additional services, treatment and resources for these children.

Overall, 12% of the children are experiencing a degree of problems related to mental retardation. However, it appears that with few exceptions, current services and resources are meeting the needs.

According to the worker questionnaire, learning disabilities begin to be identified as the child moves into the educational system. Twenty-five per cent (25%) of children in care experience some degree of learning disability. For children between 6 and 11 years, current services are not adequate for 12% while for 12 to 15 year olds, the percentage rises to 21%. Conversely, in the life skills and vocational areas, 36% of 16 and 17 year olds have problems, and needs are unmet for 28% of these.

In both staff and foster parent meetings, there was an expressed need for increased knowledge, support and services to meet the needs of children with alcohol and substance abuse problems.

Data from the worker questionnaire indicates that a number of children in all age ranges experience cultural and language difficulties. Workers indicate that generally the needs are being met for children under 12 years but adolescents require further intervention in this area. The cultural and language problems are exacerbated by the fact many children are in transracial placements. The need for services to develop the child's racial and cultural identity from an early age, preferrably through the utilization of in-race placements, was identified through several of the data collection approaches.

Workers indicate further interventions could be initiated to resolve or reduce problems for 165 children, i.e., 29% of the 577 children experiencing one or more problems. Staff identified barriers to implementing further interventions, which included non-availability of needed services (39%) and distance problems in accessing services (25%).

To summarize, the needs of children in care are many and varied. The findings indicate that existing services and resources of the department and the community cannot meet

all the children's special needs. Some of these needs have been identified in this section. The team believes that further analysis of the data is essential to the future development of services and resources as well as foster parent and staff training.

6.3 Placement Resources

Meetings with staff and foster parent groups provided information on the deficiencies as to the range and number of resources needed. Both stressed the serious lack of foster home and other resources to ensure appropriate placement for each child.

Placement resources and stability for children, particularly adolescents, are major problems for all child caring agencies. As a result of their research, Hornby and Collins concluded:

> "Compared to younger children, teenagers have lived in many more places; stay in placements for shorter periods of time; initiate moves more frequently; are considered more difficult to place by social workers and less desirable by foster parents; and for many, social workers say foster care is not the best option at all." 2.

They further add that "the group entering as teenagers experience the most problems and place the greatest strain on the system." 3.

In the eight districts and twelve sub-offices, staff in only one office indicated they sometimes had sufficient homes available to select the most appropriate home for adolescents. All others state they never have a choice available. It is also becoming increasingly difficult to find placements for ten to twelve year olds. Staff in only four offices feel they sometimes have adequate resources for this age range. The situation is only slightly better for six to ten year olds. Staff in six offices state they usually have sufficient resources for appropriate selection of homes for infants and pre-schoolers. In all cases, it is difficult to find placements for any children with exceptional needs.

Essentially, staff state they are seldom able to select a resource suitable for the individual child. They indicate this leads to inappropriate placements which in turn has serious ramifications for the child, foster families and the program. The child's problems may be heightened, resulting in further acting out behavior. The foster parents, under

severe stress may resort to inappropriate management techniques or demand the immediate removal of the child. Such situations can quickly disillusion the most dedicated foster parent leading to their withdrawal from the program. If the child's misbehavior has extended to the community it institutes a negative stereotype of foster children and the child care program. This can seriously damage future recruitment of resources.

Another major concern associated with the insufficient number of appropriate resources, is the potential for overcrowding in foster homes. Of the 96 child care files reviewed where the child is in a foster home, 13 children were in placements where there are ten or more people in the foster home, with eight or more children per home. This raises questions about the quality of care that can reasonably be provided for children with special needs in these circumstances.

Staff stated that placement of children who are in short-term care in the same homes with those in long-term care also occurs due to the shortage of resources. This can lead to further insecurities for children. For example, children in long term care can become confused when they see other children entering and leaving the foster home.

During meetings, foster parents and staff repeatedly expressed concern at the lack of a range as well as number of resources. There is an urgent need for crisis response capabilities that are reasonably accessible, for older children and youth who are exhibiting non conforming or aggressive behavior. The ability to stabilize the children so assessment and planning can occur is not available at present.

For those children with long standing problems, who need treatment, special resources are required. Such resources are almost exclusively located in Regina. Staff and foster parents are concerned that in order to obtain needed services, some children must move far from their families and familiar environment. This requires additional adjustments by the children and severely limits the opportunity for meaningful work with the children and their families.

Foster parents and staff verbalized the need for distinct services and resources to assist youth to develop skills for independence, such as career planning, household and money management and employment preparation. Some youth in long term care may have no adult support systems, such as a family, when they move into adulthood. Youth who enter care in adolescence may also lack such support systems. In

addition to a variety of services, a range of placement resources is required to enable some youth to move towards greater independence, according to individual need and ability. Such resources could also meet the needs of the adolescent entering care who neither wants or needs another family. As one foster parent stated during an interview, "If a young person wants to achieve independence, placement should be geared to this rather than misusing a foster home which is family focussed."

Adolescent girls in care who have children may require specialized placement resources and services. Learning parenting skills while having the opportunity to fulfil their personal and educational goals are key to their future success as parents.

In addition to the reluctance of many foster parents to care for adolescents, a distinct concern was expressed as to the provision of care for teenage girls. Some foster parents recognized that the girls may well be streetwise or have been sexually active or abused. Foster parents are concerned about management of the girls within the home and feel very vulnerable to allegations of sexual abuse.

Young children and adolescents who have experienced either physical or sexual abuse require specialized services and resources. Such resources must be able to protect the children from further abuse while helping them to establish more positive self images and sound interpersonal relationships. At present these resources are extremely limited.

The resource spectrum is even more limited when in-race placements are sought for Indian and native children. According to the file review, approximately 18% of foster parents are of Indian or native background. Few specialized resources have been developed or are operated by Indian or native people. Staff state there is little opportunity to place Indian or native children in resources which share their racial, cultural or linguistic backgrounds. The children must, therefore, not only come to terms with separation from their families but also make major adjustments in other areas of their life.

Staff stated that while Indian bands and native organizations are developing their capacity to provide child and family services, the department should take concrete steps to reduce the number of transracial placements. Some possible initiatives suggested are to work with the bands and other organizations to recruit Indian and native foster parents and to develop other culturally appropriate placements, at the local level.

Resource needs are also apparent for all children with severe or multi handicaps. While the number of children in care experiencing such conditions may be relatively small they require special skills of caregivers. Foster parents and staff spoke of the high demands and stress of providing care to handicapped children. Although funding has been made available to provide respite for these foster parents, the service is not obtainable in many areas. The difficulty in accessing respite services is the lack of persons with the knowledge and desire to provide the service. In the areas where special respite services are available they are viewed positively by staff and foster parents.

The department attempts to maintain children within their home areas while endeavouring to meet their special needs. However, local placement has not always been possible and it is not unusual for a child to be placed in an urban area to facilitate access to professional services required. This may interrupt contact with the biological family. Conversely, if the department maintains the child in the home area, the services required may be unavailable or, at best, only made accessible through lengthy trips for both foster parent and child. Such trips can be arduous for both child and caregiver.

During the course of meetings with staff and foster parents, the team learned of several situations where meeting special needs of children is problematic. In one instance, the foster parents have three young children, all with several problems, travelling a few hundred miles twice a month for professional services. Neither the foster parents nor staff felt it was appropriate to have three handicapped children in one home, but no other resource was available within the home area. The foster parents also had great difficulty arranging for respite due to specialized care needed by the children. The demands on the foster parents were very intense.

In another example, a young child with a serious medical condition is in a foster home where the community has no telephone. While this placement ensures the child is near the natural family, access to medical resources is a troublesome issue, especially when illness arises.

Conversely, urban children are sometimes placed in rural foster homes due to a lack of foster homes in the city. This can create additional adjustment problems for the children and disrupt family contact.

In conclusion, foster parents and staff indicate there is a lack of both range and number of appropriate resources for

all children. This is particularly acute for adolescents and children with special needs. It contributes to transracial placements, inappropriate placements, additional moves and overcrowding in foster homes. Continuity and development of positive relationships are difficult to maintain when either the placement resource or services the child requires is not locally available.

6.4 Contact With Natural Family

According to the worker questionnaire, 52% of children in the sample have continuing contact with their natural mothers and 25% with their natural fathers. For 95% of children having contact, this takes the form of visits with 53% having contact with a parent at least once per month.

For 81% of the children who have contact with their parents, workers assess visits as within the range from "of some benefit" to "very constructive" for the children. In 19%, workers' rate visits as being not constructive or of little benefit to the child.

Forty-seven percent (47%) of all children also have contact with extended family or other persons of significance to them. In only 12% of situations are these considered not constructive or of little benefit.

In their questionnaire, foster parents were also asked to identify the number of children who have contact with their natural families. Of the 641 children who have contact, this contact is rated as beneficial for 37.5% and of little or no help for 62.5%. This contrasts sharply with the workers assessments of the benefits of family contact.

For the 307 children not having contact with natural family, foster parents feel this lack of contact creates no problem for 70%, while 30% assess this as creating from few through to major problems.

The fact that foster parents have a wide range of responses to the issue of natural family contact was evident in the foster parent meetings. Some foster parents have been actively involved with natural parents for a number of years. Others recognize the value of contact and are seeking guidance in this area. Yet others see no benefit for children in natural parent contact.

In several meetings, foster parents expressed another concern in relation to visiting arrangements and contact with natural family. Some foster parents frequently arrange

visits directly with natural parents and feel this is appropriate, provided the natural parents are not hostile. They believe the social worker should deal with the natural parents in these circumstances, rather than the foster parents.

Responses in the foster parent questionnaire show that for children who have contact with their parents, regular contact is more likely to be helpful to the child than irregular contact. For 146 children, regular contact is rated as being of some help or very helpful, while foster parents say it is of little or no help for 19 children. When contact is unpredictable, foster parents say it is of some help or very helpful for 73 children and of little or no help for 274 children.

The team concludes that the importance of contact between children and natural families is not understood or accepted by all foster parents and staff. For children who are to return home, regular contact is necessary for the child to deal with separation and to enable reunification. Worker support for foster parents is essential when natural family members are unco-operative. In addition, all children, including those who do not have contact and are not returning home, need to deal with their past and with familial relationships. This must be addressed in planning for the child and in training for staff and foster parents.

6.5 Support For Children In Care

The major day-to-day support for children in care is provided by foster parents or other caregivers. Specific services and supports are also provided by departmental social workers. Support was reviewed from the perspective of the children and foster parents.

The following data was gathered through the foster parent questionnaire.

Of 422 foster parents, 76% consider the amount of worker contact with the foster children in their homes as adequate to meet the children's needs. A further 13% consider the amount of contact as adequate for some children, while 11% state worker contact is inadequate.

When asked if workers regularly meet with the child alone, 30% of respondents said yes, 21% said sometimes, 49% said the worker never does so. Of the foster parents who said no or sometimes, 39% said closer contact would be helpful for the children. One hundred and eighteen (118) foster parents

had comments to offer on this matter. Further analysis of the data is required to ascertain whether these are for or against worker/child contact.

During meetings and in interviews, numerous foster parents stressed the need for the children to have individual time with their workers on a regular basis. Some saw frequent staff turnover as a severe problem because a child cannot relate to a series of workers and never really establishes a trusting relationship with one worker.

The thread running through many of the comments of adolescents interviewed was the need for a worker to be available and to understand, assist, listen, and, essentially, provide a professional service.

Adolescents who were interviewed were asked how frequently they had telephone or person-to-person contact with their worker and how satisfied they were with help received from their worker. The results are tabulated in Table 9 below.

Table 9

Adolescents Views of Frequency of Worker Contact and Satisfaction with Help Received

Frequency of contact with worker	Satisfaction with help received				
	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	No Particular Feeling	Not Sure	Other
Once/month or more	11	2	2	1	1*
Every 2 - 3 months	7	2	2	2	2**
Twice a year	1	2	-	1	-
Once a year	-	-	-	-	-
Less than once a year	1	2	-	-	-
Other	-	-	1	-	4***
TOTALS	20	8	5	4	7

* Child stated worker was no help
** Both stated the worker was helpful sometimes
*** None of the four knew who their worker was

Of the 44 children interviewed, 29 made suggestions to improve the system for foster children. Some suggestions identified by several children include:

. careful screening and/or development of understanding foster parents (9);

. social workers should visit foster homes and also see the children independently for individual attention and counselling (7);

. more money provided for clothing, spending, maintenance and activities (7);

. keep siblings together (3);

. ensure there are more visits with natural family (3).

. place children in same-race homes (2);

A variety of other suggestions were made by the adolescents. Their suggestions include group meetings of adolescents, monitoring homes to make sure children are not abused, better preparation and follow-up for new placements, more independence for older adolescents, and talking with children about sexuality.

These adolescents were also asked what they expected of their social workers. It is noteworthy that six said "nothing" and eight said they didn't know. Major expectations as identified by the remaining 30 youth include:

- to visit and keep in touch regularly, be more available - 14;

- someone to talk to about things not easy to talk about - 10;

- to listen, be understanding, concerned and helpful - 10;

- to help the child understand his/her good points, feelings and behavior - 9;

- to ask the child's opinion as to help needed - 4;

- to provide financial help - 4.

The team is of the opinion that the department is fulfilling

some of the children's needs and expectations for service. However, there are some serious deficiencies in staff meeting the expectations of both children and foster parents. These expectations are related to the worker's availability, their ability to form a helping relationship with the child, and to talk with the child about those matters the child finds difficult to talk about. Children are therefore seeking a professional service from the department.

6.6 Planning For Children In Care

One of the objectives of the review was to determine if planning and goal-setting is taking place for children in care. Furthermore, the team wished to determine who is involved in planning and, if possible, the suitability of the plan.

Ensuring children are aware of and involved in planning for their future is essential. As a result of her study of children in foster care, Thorpe concluded that children in care need to be aware of what is going to happen to them, or to be told if their future is uncertain. She states:

> "For knowledge of uncertainty is shared and thus bearable, whereas uncertainty of knowledge can be frightening, even disturbing, since in the absence of facts, fantasies and fears run wild.
>
> Whatever their expected future the need of children to know what is going to happen to them implies, above all, a need for serious planning for children in care from the very time of their entry into care and, additionally, a need to involve the children in the planning process. [4.]

Since two structures, the Child Care and Family Services Planning Committees, had been established in the mid-70's, feedback on the value of these approaches and alternatives were discussed in meetings with staff and foster parents.

Planning committees as established have ceased to function in most parts of Saskatchewan. Variations of this committee approach remain in a few districts. Many foster parents want reinstatement of the planning committees. It appears that with the demise of the committees, many foster parents feel they have lost their opportunity to participate in planning. However, aside from the districts where

committees still exist, district staff are not in favor of resurrecting the committees in their original form because of the problems identified in the Planning Committee evaluation. 5.

The team found that the majority of foster parents and staff would be prepared to consider alternate mechanisms to assure joint planning. Such mechanisms must include children, natural parents and foster parents in the planning process. For example, case conferences, involving all relevant parties, before or right after placement of a child are used in some instances. This approach lends itself well to establishing plans, goals and expectations of all parties. It also ensures everyone has the same information. Contracting for services with foster parents for each placement is also seen as having merit, and would delineate the responsibilities and expectations of all parties.

Data on planning for children was also gathered through the worker and foster parent questionnaires, file reviews, and interviews with children, natural parents, foster parents and staff.

In the file review it was noted that in 40% of the cases the caregiver was involved in establishing the plan, partially involved in 17% of the cases and not involved in 4%. Unfortunately, the caregiver involvement could not be determined in 38% of the records.

According to interviews with foster parents, 36 foster parents were aware of the planning for the child and six were not. Twenty-eight (28) of these foster parents had been involved in making the plan and 16 were not involved. Twenty-six (26) indicated they were totally pleased with the plan undertaken.

Of the relatively small number of natural parents interviewed (21), eight said they were involved in making the plan. Six parents said they were not aware of the plan for their children.

Information was also sought through the file review as to the child's involvement in the development of a plan. The records indicated that 17% were involved, 13% were partially involved, 9% were not involved and again in 39% of the files it was impossible to determine if the child was involved in the process. The remainder were not involved due to age or handicap.

The interviews undertaken with 44 adolescents determined that 27 children were aware of planning for the future and 17 were not. Twenty-two (22) stated they were involved in

making the plan while 22 were not.

Children had some interesting and pertinent views on planning which included:

-- keeping siblings together
-- "placing kids in homes of the same culture"
-- involving children in planning
-- "workers should prepare kids more before moving them into a foster home - don't just plop them in, stay and talk to them"
-- that for kids who can't get along with their parents and time out is needed, they should have the opportunity for counselling and lots of visits (more than two a month) so they could learn to live together.

-- One teenager further stated that the plan for her was to return home in two months and prior to her return, there would be family counselling to work through problems. She questioned how this counselling was going to take place when her placement was a considerable distance from her parents' home.

In summation, all meeting participants and those interviewed confirmed that not only is planning essential, but it must also involve the caregiver, child and parent to be meaningful. As well, it must be timely, consistent and clear in terms of responsibilities of all parties.

6.7 Communication and Information Sharing

The team believes that sharing information and an open, reliable communication system is vital in a co-operative approach to achieve the best possible care and plan for children.

Information to be shared with foster parents ranges from that which is critical to the health and safety of the child, such as medical and special needs, to that which is key to a sense of identity and belonging.

The common view expressed at group meetings was that the quality of information shared with foster parents is not only inconsistent but is also deemed inadequate by the caregivers. To address the issue of insufficient information being provided at the time of placement, two districts recently developed one page forms to chart basic, essential information about the child to give to foster parents at the time of placement. In each meeting participants agreed that such a form would be beneficial to

everyone and should be part of a standardized procedure.

Foster parents participating in meetings quite consistently stated that pertinent information concerning the child, i.e., medical information, educational and behavioral problems, were shared "sometimes". Staff stated they share all possible information based on what they know about the child, at the time.

In nearly every meeting, a few foster parents would indicate they felt from time to time workers didn't "tell all" regarding the child's behavioral problems due to the risk that the foster parent would not accept placement. They stated they recognized the workers' dilemma and perhaps would act in a similar fashion if they were in the workers' shoes. The team did not raise this issue at staff meetings. However, staff frequently stated they believe foster parents think there is purposeful withholding of information so placement will not be rejected. They further indicated that in the instance of emergency placements, their knowledge of the child is extremely limited. However, what is known is shared.

Several questions in the foster parent questionnaire addressed the matter of sharing information and meaningful communication. Foster parents were asked to review a short list of basic information factors and identify if the data was received always, usually, sometimes or never at the time a child is placed. There was a wide range of responses which are detailed in Appendix C. Of particular concern to the team was the number of times information was not received.

Foster parents were also asked if they found their children's workers open to discussion on problems and progress of the foster children in their home. In addition they were asked if they had opportunity to express their views and if their views were considered. The results appear in Table 10.

Table 10

Communication With Foster Parents

Regarding Children in Care

	Always	Most of the Time	Rarely	Never	Have Not Discussed
In the past year, have children's workers been open to discussion of problems/progress	64%	28%	4.4%	.5%	3%
Have workers given foster parents ample opportunity to express their views?	60.6%	30.4%	5.3%	.9%	2.8%
Have foster parent views been given adequate consideration	45.5%	43%	8.7%	2.8%	--

In a number of meetings, staff and foster parents expressed concern that some foster parents are not treating information regarding foster children and the natural parents in a confidential manner. Lapses in confidentiality can occur when speaking with the extended foster family, friends or other foster parents. Such lapses can cause considerable distress and damage the trust and positive relationships that need to be developed among all parties.

Staff have clear guidelines regarding confidentiality. It was suggested that foster parents would benefit from similar

guidelines. The guidelines would assist foster parents to manage the confidential information. The proposal that confidentiality be thoroughly discussed during the home study process received general agreement as did that of a foster parent oath of confidentiality.

Meeting participants stated that, at times, both foster parents and children are subjected to considerable questioning by curious people. Staff advised they have assisted adoptive parents and children to develop "cover stories" and a polite way to turn aside personal questions. They proposed this technique be applied in foster care as well.

In addition to the need to share essential information concerning foster children and their families, foster parents stated their need to develop a meaningful and productive working relationship with the department.

A critical item identified was their need to be aware of staff changes at the local level. Some foster parents and children do not know who their worker is, and so have no known support at times of difficulty. Overlap of workers was indicated as the most desirable method of staff change so there would be a smooth transition for child, foster parent and new worker.

Foster parents requested an up to date, more comprehensive policy and procedural manual. Both foster parents and staff stated the manual is outdated and in need of major revisions.

The concensus is that there is a need for improved communication and information sharing in both case specific material and administrative matters. According to foster parent responses, information provided at the time a child is placed is often inadequate. However, overall they consider communication regarding the children during placement as satisfactory to good. The team believes that clarification of expectations and strong communication links must be established between staff and foster parents.

6.8 Discipline

The issue of discipline of children in care was addressed as a specific topic in interviews with youth, their foster parents and workers, as well as in the meetings with foster parents and staff.

In the interviews regarding specific adolescents, the foster

parents were asked what type of discipline they use and what they feel is the most effective way to discipline this child. The most common forms of discipline are talking, withdrawal of privileges, grounding and loss of allowance. Being sent to the bedroom and "consequences laid down in advance" were used to a lesser degree. Most believed that talking and/or withdrawal of privileges are the most effective approaches to discipline.

The youth were asked to identify the rules in their foster homes and what happens if they break these rules or do something they are not supposed to. The majority indicated there were rules related to gaining permission before going out and curfews. Lesser numbers mentioned the forbiddance of swearing and use of tobacco, alcohol or drugs. Grounding and removal of privileges were identified as the most commonly used forms of discipline. Discussion, lecturing, scolding and yelling were also identified, and two said they "got a licking".

The topic of discipline was included as an agenda item for both foster parent and staff meetings. The agenda was forwarded well in advance to enable thought and discussion prior to the meetings. Information was received in the form of individual and group briefs as well as through participation in discussions at the meetings.

There was an atmosphere of discomfort in meetings with staff and foster parents when discipline was discussed. Discussion was wide ranging but two factors were overwhelming in clarity. Number one was that everyone had their own definition of what constituted discipline, and number two was that few believed the current policy respecting discipline was acceptable.

It was noted that discipline and corporal punishment were often used interchangeably in discussions. The lack of a common understanding or definition of what constitutes discipline was readily apparent. Some interpret discipline in a very positive way to help the child learn acceptable behavior and self control. Other persons view discipline narrowly as control and punishment.

A number of foster parents stated they do not use physical punishment with either their own or their foster children. They were, however, concerned about the lack of clarity in departmental policy which permits varying standards of child management.

Some foster parents were apprehensive that if the department put forward a policy banning corporal punishment, a "bum tap" or slap to the fingers of child reaching to a hot stove

would be interpreted as abusive. Others were concerned that such a policy would remove their ability to control and manage the children, particularly the youth, in their homes. Many foster parents expressed the view that should the department not want them to use physical punishment, they must first be provided with training in alternative child management approaches.

The existing policy states that foster parents are to treat foster children as their own, taking into account the children's background. This is seen as problematic by some foster parents as they believe it means they must use different disciplinary approaches for foster children and their own children. They disagree with the establishment of two standards for discipline in their home. Other foster parents do not see this as a problem, stating they use differing management techniques with their own children, in recognition of individual needs and personalities.

Foster parents and staff stated the existing policy is open to individual interpretation by both departmental staff and foster parents. This fact, in conjunction with the potential number of social workers in contact with an individual foster parent, can result in contradictory direction. The end result is frustration, confusion and a feeling of vulnerability on the part of the foster parent.

Staff and some foster parents recognize that foster children are different from natural children as their past, often traumatic, life events will affect how they respond to discipline. The majority of children in care have experienced more than one placement. The children have to deal with the confusion and adjustment problems of forming new relationships in each home and adapting to each family's unique standards and lifestyle, including rules and approaches to discipline.

Some foster parents suggested that the matter of discipline be explored fully during the orientation/homestudy process. This would enable the "weeding out" of applicants who are too rigid to recognize and adapt their discipline techniques to meet the special needs of foster children.

Departmental staff and foster parents are asking for a clear and decisive statement of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable discipline for children in care. They want to be provided with knowledge of and training in acceptable child management techniques.

There was concensus regarding joint training for child care staff and foster parents. They also suggested that such training be extended to child protection staff and parent

aides so the child returning to his or her parents will not have to adjust to a totally unfamiliar manner of discipline.

Children in care, due to their past experiences, have special needs which create unique child management problems for the caregivers. The team concludes the existing policy on discipline for children in care is unacceptable since it is open to many interpretations and practices. Given the range of views and personal beliefs on this sensitive issue, it is unlikely that a consensus on a discipline policy can be achieved. However, the team believes that if clear direction is provided as to acceptable and unacceptable disciplinary approaches, training is provided and foster parents are supported, a policy based on positive child management practices is desirable and achievable, and would place corporal punishment in its proper perspective.

7.0 SERVICE SYSTEMS

7.1 Community and Other Agency Supports

The child in care system relies heavily on services and supports from other agencies, including other government departments and community agencies. The services needed for many children in care are not unique to this group but are necessary for other families who have children with special needs.

Availability, accessibility and adequacy of these services were examined in relation to the needs of natural parents, foster parents and children. Discussions were held with all foster parent and staff groups on the subject of community resources.

Staff and foster parents generally agree that a variety of community-based services to support families and to prevent children from unnecessarily entering care are crucial. Parent aide programs, operated by various non-government organizations, are generally viewed positively as are teen parent and other family support programs.

Both groups also identified the necessity of community services to provide continuing support to children after they return to their families from departmental care. Services are needed to solidify the gains made which enable the return of the child, encourage continued progress and to ensure the safety of the child. Such services range from management of developmental handicaps to counselling for improvement of family communication and functioning.

Intervention is required for families at the time of crisis. Staff indicated it was not unusual for individuals or families to be obliged to wait for weeks or even months for services from some agencies, due to demands for these services. Services have limited value if they are not available at the time of crisis, such as adolescent-parent conflict situations. Lack of these services may result in the child entering care.

The responses received from participants at the meetings show commonalities and differences in the perceived gaps and adequacy of services throughout the province. Some of the common service gaps noted are in the following areas:

- availability of services to assist children who have been sexually exploited;
- services and resources to assist children and youth experiencing alcohol and other substance abuse problems,

including educational material and assistance with regard to "sniffing";
- mental health services and resources for children with severe emotional problems;
- treatment for children or youth who are perpetrators of sexual assaults;
- services for youth to prepare them for independence;
- crisis intervention services for families experiencing parent-child conflict.

Some of the service gaps identified appear to be more pronounced in certain parts of the province. Medical services for children with acute physical and medical needs is one example. In some rural communities, most notably in the north, gaps in health services were noted. However, the difficulties in providing medical and other services given the sparse population in a large geographic area were recognized.

The special education needs of many children in care, as previously identified, were confirmed in meetings with foster parents and staff. While some level of special education services are in place across the province, the extent of availability and quality seems to vary.

The foster parent questionnaires elicited responses as to the helpfulness of the children's schools if the children have special problems. The school system is seen as being very helpful for about 50% of the children. For only small numbers of children do foster parents rate helpfulness at "no help at all".

More specific information as to what agencies are utilized and whether these services are appropriate was gathered through both foster parent questionnaires and file reviews. This data requires more detailed compilation and analysis in order for the department to enter into discussions regarding unmet needs with other government departments and with non-government organizations. For example, 11% of respondents to the foster parent questionnaire state children placed with them need services that are either unavailable or inaccessible in their community. Workers also identified non-availability or inaccessibility of services for numerous children.

The team concludes it is necessary to increase the level of specialized government and non-government services to address the needs of children, who are with their natural families or in care. Some of the required services have yet to be developed. Others exist in some parts of the province. The remainder are available throughout the province but appear unable to meet all current demands. A

co-ordinated effort is required to ensure the existence and availability of services to support natural families as well as foster families.

7.2 Foster Parent Recruitment and Support

Recruitment and retention of suitable foster parents has been and continues to be a challenge to child care agencies throughout North America. Pasztor and Burgess (1982) note that this problem existed 25 years ago, and go on to state:

> Today agencies still indicate a desperate need to locate foster homes, particularly for older children and children with special needs. It has also become increasingly difficult to locate placements for young children and teenagers who are currently in foster homes or institutions that do not meet their specific needs. 6.

In addition, role of the foster parent has changed over the last two decades, but the new role has not been clearly defined. Consequently, recruitment is often based on selling the child instead of the job, does not clarify the foster parent role as part of a team to provide services to children and families and lacks an appropriate selection and preparation process (Pasztor and Burgess, 1982, Pasztor, 1985). 7.

Information gathered about foster care in Saskatchewan has confirmed the team's opinion that these problems and others, described by authors such as Pasztor and Burgess, are major contributors to inadequacies in the province's child in care program. In addition, the racial and cultural characteristics of a large percentage of Saskatchewan's child in care population require special recognition and response if the children's needs are to be met.

The profile of children and of foster parents, as previously stated, shows the number of Indian and native children in care far exceeds the number of in-race placements available for them. Staff indicated their efforts to recruit and retain Indian and native foster homes has met with limited success. They believe that in-race placements are desireable for all children and that innovative approaches must be developed to recruit and retain Indian and native resources. These needs were reiterated by many foster parents.

Both staff and foster parents expressed concern regarding what they perceive to be a poor public image of foster care.

They believe the needs of the children and their families, the role of foster parents and the supports required are not known and understood by the public. They indicated that the department and the S.F.P.A. must address this issue in order to develop community support to support the foster care program.

At the meetings with S.F.P.A. locals, foster parents put forward many recommendations including the need for improved support services, orientation and assessment, training and departmental staffing. In large part, foster parents and staff identified the same issues and frequently proposed similar solutions. There are, of course, some variations as a result of the dissimilarities between urban, rural and northern areas, including different delivery systems.

The foster parent questionnaire acknowledged that people have many reasons for becoming foster parents and that strong love for children and a desire to help them was one of these. In addition, foster parents were asked to indicate the single most important reason for becoming foster parents. While many reasons were given, 11% of the respondents stated they became foster parents to provide a home for children they knew; 13% wished to care for children but did not desire a permanent parenting role; 9% because they were physically unable to have their own children and 7% to fulfill their religious beliefs.

Foster parents were also asked to identify where they first heard about fostering. Thirty-five percent (35%) indicated the knowledge came from other foster parents; 17% from social workers; 16% from relatives; 14% from the media. This information serves to support that, to date, foster parents themselves have likely been the most effective recruiters; but, no one approach has been clearly successful in getting information to potential foster parents.

In the interviews with foster parents (44), information was sought on their expectations of themselves and of their social workers. Their expectations of themselves are consistent with current departmental policy, and include the provision of guidance and daily care, to be substitute parents and to raise the child as their own.

Their expectations of the social worker include:

- to be available to discuss events or problems dealing with the child (31);
- to provide encouragement and support (15);
- to make suggestions that are helpful in caring for

the child (15);

. to be open and direct with foster parents (10).

Ten commented on the excellent service they receive from their worker.

Foster parents were asked, in their questionnaire, how frequently a departmental worker had visited their home in the past year. Of 418 responses, 23% had received at least monthly visits and 31% at least once every three months. Another 25% stated a worker visits every four to six months. The remaining 21% have visits less frequently than once every six months, including 7% who had no home visits during the past year.

They were further asked to identify if social workers assigned to the foster children are available when needed. Of the 417 responding, 33% stated always; 49% most of the time; 16% sometimes and 1.5% never.

The foster parents interviewed, regarding adolescents in their home, were asked to state the frequency of worker contact, either by telephone or face-to-face, and whether this was adequate to meet their needs.

Table 11

Frequency of Worker Contact and Foster Parent Views Regarding Amount of Contact

Frequency	Views Concerning Amount of Contact		
	Too Much	Right Amount	Too Little
At least once a week	--	6	--
At least once a month	--	11	3
At least once in 3 months	1	5	5
At least once in 6 months	--	2	4
At least once in a year	--	1	--
Other *	--	4	2**
TOTAL	1	29	14

* Responses in this category were that frequency varied and related to an "as needed" basis.

** One stated the worker listens to the community instead of seeing the foster parents.

The findings regarding foster parent views on adequacy of worker contact vary according to the method of gathering information. In the questionnaire, foster parents were asked if overall worker contact was adequate to meet their needs. Of 430 responses, 75% said yes, 12% said for some children, while 13% said it was not adequate. The interview responses (Table 11) indicate 32% of that group feel they have too little contact. In the foster parent meetings many recommendations for more worker contact and support were verbalized.

By means of the questionnaire, information was sought from foster parents regarding their level of satisfaction with foster parenting, plans for continuation as foster parents and the changes they feel are most needed. Eighty-four percent (84%) of foster mothers are satisfied or very satisfied as foster parents, and 14% have mixed feelings. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of foster fathers were satisfied or very satisfied, and 18% have mixed feelings. Foster parents indicated that of other family members, 56% are satisfied or very satisfied but 32% have mixed feelings. The remainder in each group are dissatisfied with foster parenting.

In their questionnaire, foster parents were asked if, during the past year, their social workers were open to discussion of the impact of fostering on their own family. Of 411 responses, 68% stated always or most of the time and 15% said rarely or never. The remaining 17% indicated it has not been discussed. While the reasons could vary, the team believes it is possible the need for open discussion around this issue has not been identified as an expectation for all staff and foster parents. In response to the question, whether foster parents feel at ease with their workers, 98% of the 437 respondents stated "always" or "most of the time". Given this openness in relationships, it appears this issue can be overcome with clarification of expectations.

Through the questionnaire it was found that 22% of the respondents intend to leave the program in the next two years. The ages of these foster parents in relation to all foster parents in the sample are detailed in Table 12.

Table 12

Age Ranges of Foster Parents Planning to Leave the Foster Care Program

	Foster Mothers			Foster Fathers		
Age Range	Total in Sample	Number Leaving	# Leaving as % of Age Range	Total in Sample	Number Leaving	# Leaving as % of Age Range
18-24	7	3	43%	5	1	20%
25-31	67	11	16	34	7	21
32-38	106	29	27	89	19	23
39-45	130	27	21	100	28	28
46-52	86	15	17	82	11	13
53-59	69	13	19	68	10	15
60 +	37	10	27	61	20	33

The foster parents planning to leave the program were asked to identify their reasons, which could include more than one. The two most frequently identified reasons were "inadequate foster care payments" and "needing a temporary break from foster parenting" (38 out of 109 for each category). The second and third most frequent reasons identified are that foster parenting has affected their own family's well-being (31) and the needs of the foster children are too demanding (30). Retirement was stated as a reason for leaving by 23 of the 109. Seventy percent (70%) of retirement group are over the age of 52.

The high stress level and potential negative impact of fostering upon the foster family was echoed in meetings and interviews with foster parents. The effect of fostering on families demands recognition and inclusion in orientation, support and training.

A stressful time for foster parents occurs when there are abuse allegations involving children in their home. During meetings, a few foster parents expressed concern for the quality of care provided to some foster children and recognized the potential for abuse. Questions were raised regarding the purpose and manner of investigations resulting from allegations of abuse. On occasion, some foster parents queried why the department would investigate every complaint

regardless of the seriousness of the allegations or the identity of the complainant. Invariably, other foster parents in the group, some of whom had been investigated, supported the need for departmental action. They stated that not only should the department be vigilant in monitoring homes, but should ensure that children are seen separately from foster parents so they may express their feelings more readily. Most foster parents regard the investigation and follow-up of allegations of abuse as essential if the department is to act as a responsible parent and ensure that foster children receive good care.

Some foster parents were not aware that procedures had been established for investigations of abuse in foster care. The information that the S.F.P.A. and the department were jointly working to update the investigative procedures was viewed positively. The need for support from the S.F.P.A. for the foster parents under investigation was also identified, since the entire family is under severe stress during this period.

Some foster parents voiced concerns in relation to situations where the police lay charges against a foster parent under the Criminal Code of Canada. Of particular concern is the liability and cost of defence born by the foster parent who is later exonerated.

Foster parents questionnaire respondents gave some suggestions for changes to the foster care system. Ongoing and special training in child care and parenting skills were frequently identified. However, the one change which far exceeded all others in frequency of responses was "fewer worker changes".

Other suggestions included greater involvement with the natural family, improved matching of child to foster family, more community services, and more frequent and better communication with the social worker.

In the interviews with the 44 foster parents, the most commonly noted recommendations for improvements to benefit both foster children and foster parents were:

- more support and contact for foster parents from the social worker
- more individual contact between workers and children
- more training for foster parents
- better planning for children
- higher clothing allowances and higher compensation in general

In summary, the recruitment and retention of competent

foster parents is imperative for provincial child in care programs. The team believes there is a lack of community understanding and involvement in foster care which impedes recruitment and fails to provide the ongoing support necessary for foster families. The need for Indian and native placement resources is apparent. Although many foster parents express satisfaction with fostering, a significant number are leaving the program due to the difficulty and stress associated with the task, lack of professional support and lack of appropriate compensation.

7.3 Foster Parent Orientation and Training

Orientation and continuing training are integral components of recruitment and retention of foster homes. Clear definition of foster parent roles, in keeping with current family services philosophy, is necessary to develop appropriate training programs.

Campbell and Maslany (1986) report that recent literature emphasizes the need for the foster parent to be a functioning team member and to be a "role model" for natural parents. They go on to state:

> The foster care provider needs special training to cope with the complexities of working with the natural family. Traditionally, foster parent training has focused on skills specific to relating to the child; however, two recent training volumes (McFadden, 1980; BCFFPA, 1985) indicate that this focus is changing and that additional skills are needed if the foster parent is to be an effective member of the team. 8.

Information regarding current orientation and training was gathered through meetings. Formal group orientation programs are presently offered in four districts. These are not standardized and vary in length between two and six sessions. Orientation occurs in other districts, but on an individual rather than group basis.

During meetings, foster parents and staff recommended the development and use of standardized, mandatory orientation packages for foster and adoptive parents. They also agreed that orientation sessions should be carried out jointly by experienced departmental staff and foster parents. Participants also believed that in rural areas where distance and/or the number of applicants made group sessions extremely difficult to organize, adaptation of a standardized package should be undertaken and utilized.

It was further recommended that orientation clearly outline the job to be done, the policies, procedures and supports in program delivery. The role and expectations of foster parent must be enunciated clearly to facilitate self awareness, self-assessment and screening.

In some meetings, the possibility of police record checks for foster home applicants was discussed and it was agreed that such a procedure be implemented. One experienced foster parent supported this recommendation by saying "You wouldn't hire a bank robber to guard a bank. Surely children deserve the same protection."

In meetings, it was determined that training for foster parents is occuring to a greater of lesser degree in most parts of the province. The majority of staff and foster parents in provincial meetings support a standardized training package which should be offered frequently. Neither foster parents nor staff believe that, at the present time, a sufficient number of foster parents participate in training. Frequently, the same people attend training.

Perceived barriers to attendance at training sessions are distance for rural foster parents, cost and availability of babysitters, and apathy. Foster parents noted their babysitting costs for one evening often exceed the payment they receive for an entire day.

Several foster parent and staff groups felt that training should be mandatory but recognize that enforcement of participation would be difficult. Suggestions to encourage attendance include provision of certificates for completed sessions and establishment of expectation for participation in ongoing training during orientation.

Many foster parents and staff believe that to achieve a knowledgable and professional foster care service, payment must be linked to the training and skill of foster parents. It is recognized that while this may not be immediately achievable, it should be a long term goal.

Information concerning training received through the foster parent questionnaire does not consistently support the views expressed in meetings. Thirty-five percent (35%) of respondents indicate more training is required, 59% said no and 6% did not respond.

The questionnaire was used to determine if foster parents believed orientation is adequate. These responses were then correlated with their expressed need for more training. Of 513 foster parent responses, 78% said they had been provided

with sufficient information when they began fostering. Of these, 31% said they need more training. Of the 22% who said they did not receive enough initial information, 58% request more training. Of those who said they did not receive enough information, about 68% have used books, manuals or pamphlets on fostering in the previous two years.

These findings vary considerably from information obtained in foster parent meetings. The consensus at the meetings was that orientation for new foster parents was inadequate and that orientation is key to preparation for foster parenting as well as forming the basis for continuing training.

Training needs for foster parents, as identified by foster parents and staff, are similar. Those most frequently mentioned by foster parents were treatment and care for abused children, parenting and behavior management, separation, working with natural family and dealing with substance abuse. Specific needs regarding cross cultural issues for children and families were identified, but with less frequency.

The provision of standardized, comprehensive orientation training is basic to a solid program. Both staff and foster parents support the concept of joint training in key areas, such as child management. Since foster and adoptive parents essentially care for the same children, and therefore encounter the same issues, they would benefit from common orientation and training programs. In addition, solutions must be found to overcome the barriers to attendance such as, distance, cost and availability of child care and apathy.

7.4 The Saskatchewan Foster Parents Association

The Saskatchewan Foster Parents Association (S.F.P.A.), a non-profit society, was established in 1974 as a result of a few foster parent groups across the province identifying the benefits of such an organization.

The goals and objectives of the organization as they appear in the S.F.P.A. newsletter are:

- to bring together for the purpose of creating better understanding the foster parents living in Saskatchewan;

- to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas in handling of problems common to foster parenthood;

- to create an awareness of the role of Saskatchewan Social Services and its relationship with foster parents;

- to provide for easier access by the social worker to a major group of foster parents;

- to provide the means whereby foster parents might better place recommendations before Saskatchewan Social Services;

- to develop better understanding by the community of the need for foster homes, the needs of foster children, and the need for the community to accept and work with the foster parent group to the end that foster children will be accepted without patronage.

- to improve the lot of foster children and provide them with status in the home and in the community. 9.

All approved foster parents automatically become members of the association. Funding for the expansion and development of locals commenced in 1978. At present there are 16 locals in the province.

Much of the work of the organization is carried out by a small number of committed local and provincial executive members. The Department of Social Services increased funding in the spring of 1986 to enable the employment of an Executive Director.

The team reviewed communication links between S.F.P.A. locals and district offices. There is variation in relationships and communication patterns. It appears that when there is consistent staffing within a district and a liaison person is actively working with the local, foster parents have a positive opinion of the staff and departmental programs. In such locations, the exchange of information is seldom a problem and foster parents are inclined to go to the liaison person for help to work out problems. In areas where there has been considerable staff turnover, and no designated liaison person, concerns were expressed as to the lack of information sharing. This concern results in frustration, individualized complaints and loss of a productive relationship.

Foster parents pointed out their need to be aware of policy, procedural and program changes and to have the opportunity to discuss them with departmental staff. They also voiced their need to be aware of developments outside the foster care program. Areas of information considered vital included staff changes, organizational/boundary changes, and other program initiatives, e.g., parent aide, Young

Offenders, adoption.

One of the objectives of the Association is to provide a forum to enable the regular sharing of information and to facilitate joint problem solving between the department and the S.F.P.A. Foster parents indicated that neither the forum nor the ongoing communication system is effectively operating across the province.

Active Association members have, from time to time, become discouraged by the lack of involvement of their membership. Meetings and training initiatives are often attended by the same people with the wider membership remaining relatively uninvolved. Attendance of foster parents at review meetings was unpredictable. In some locals where a good turnout was anticipated, numbers were limited. In other areas, numerous foster parents had travelled many miles to participate.

Through means of the foster parent questionnaire the team endeavoured to determine how the Association is seen by its membership. Foster parents were asked if they attend Association functions and if so, do they find this involvement helpful. Responses indicate that 22% attend regularly, 46% attend occasionally and 32% never. Of those who attend regularly or occasionally, 72% find the involvement helpful and the remaining 28% do not find it helpful.

When asked how the association was helpful, 210 foster parents responded. The responses, in order of frequency, are:

- peer support for problems in foster parenting that arise on a day-to-day basis (161);

- organizing and sponsoring training workshops (60);

- provision of information concerning departmental policy, procedures and administration (32);

- opportunity for foster familiies to enjoy and benefit from social functions with each other (26).

A further question asked was "if there are things the Association is not doing for foster parents which you think should be done". Of 447 persons responding, 17% said yes and 29% said no. Over half of the group indicate they don't know.

Some of the suggestions they made regarding the Association were provision of more educational programs, finding ways to increase attendance at workshops, and advocating for

improvements in the child care program. Examples of issues for advocacy were maintenance rates, the discipline policy, liability insurance, respite and planning for children.

Some foster parents used this opportunity to express concerns about current functioning of their Association. The complaints include the factional and gossipy nature of some locals, no attempt to welcome new members and lack of communication among foster parents across the province.

In summary, the team believes that relationships and communication links between the Association and the department are inconsistent and require improvement at both the provincial and local levels. The Association must also continue efforts to assess its relevance and value to the membership, and take action to revitalize and involve the grassroots of the organization.

7.5 Staff Support and Training

In meetings and interviews, workers expressed their belief that training in child in care services is inadequate. One week of basic introductory training for all child in care staff was undertaken in 1985/86, but this was the only program specific training that has occurred in the recent past.

This one week of training was identified as being very helpful but more training, particularly in specialized areas of child care work, is considered essential. The Child Protection Services basic training is also suggested as useful for child in care staff.

The qualifications of the 37 workers interviewed, in relation to the adolescent group, corresponded with staff qualifications as outlined in the staff profile on page 18. Ten (10) out of 14 workers interviewed who did not have professional social work training stated that professional education would be useful to them.

Examples of specific training needs identified by this group include gaining a better general understanding of the philosophy, policy and procedures of the program. Staff identified their need for specialized training so they are able to assist foster parents in behavior management and parenting skills. Some of these training needs include the care and treatment of physically and sexually abused children, working with adolescents, dealing with alcohol and substance abuse, helping children to understand their "roots" and working with natural families. Staff also

expressed a need for training in family assessment, separation, counselling for adoptive families experiencing problems and caseload management.

Staff believe the department must encourage the recruitment of Indian and native staff. They also identified the need for cross cultural training for themselves and caregivers.

Foster parents reinforce the workers' call for well-trained staff in child in care services. Foster parents are generally very supportive of social workers, recognizing problems of time, caseload size and worker turnover. However, they clearly state that staff with no counselling skills are not effective, even if their intentions are good.

Foster parents indicate that training of social workers should involve some instruction by foster parents. "Every social worker should work in a group home or foster home to gain experience and understanding of the other's role," was a statement made by one foster parent. This approach to staff training is not confined to foster parents but is supported by a number of social workers. The use of joint training sessions in many of the special need areas is strongly supported by both groups.

One worker summed up a further area of training, stating, "Mid-management is the key to service delivery and worker development, and the worker's job satisfaction and job effectiveness. Training of new workers is left to other workers while the supervisor should be guiding."

Some supervisors expressed the need for special training to assist them in their role. For those who have limited background in family services, program related training is desired. This also applies to those supervisors who are charged with responsibility for several programs. Other areas for supervisory development include training, management and support of staff; and also, monitoring of the service.

Staff identified some major needs to be addressed within the system. These include stabilization of the organization and the development of visible support up and down the system. Clear definition of roles and expectations are required, in addition to clerical supports which enable social workers to limit administrative duties and concentrate on social work functions. The development of initiatives to reduce workloads and staff turnover are essential. Improved communication and ongoing availability of clearly defined policies and procedures, (i.e., a current Family Services manual), are required by all staff.

To summarize, staff have identified their needs for additional training and support to fulfill their roles in child in care services. All workers indicate specialized training in specific child care related areas as well as workload management is necessary. Professional social work education is seen as desireable by numerous staff who have not received it. Supervisory training needs in both program and staff development were expressed by many staff members. In addition, clarification of staff roles and expectations, supports to enable them to carry out their functions and workload reductions would enhance the standard of services to children and families.

7.6 Service Delivery System

The team noted a diversity of service delivery systems and, also, variation in utilization of staff throughout the province. Both have implications for the quality and level of service.

In some urban centres (including Regina and Saskatoon), resource development is the major function of designated staff. However, even in these locations the role of these staff members may vary considerably. In some areas, resource development staff are responsible for the orientation and home study process only. In others, they also do regular foster home reassessments, and sometimes are assigned to provide continuing services to all foster homes.

In some districts or offices, child protection staff continue to be the workers for children in voluntary and temporary care, but not for the foster homes in which the children are placed. In some cases, a child care worker is responsible for specific foster homes and all children placed in those homes. Another variation is a child care worker assigned to specific foster homes and to certain children in care. However, the worker may neither be responsible for all children placed in her assigned homes, nor will children on her caseload necessarily be in her assigned foster homes.

The potential for role confusion is high since numerous workers can be involved with a single foster home. This results in conflicting expectations, inconsistent support for foster parents and lack of a common standard of service for children. Some foster parents pointed out the difficulties for children in the same home who receive differing levels of service from their respective workers.

For example, if one child is seen frequently by his worker and is involved in planning while another child seldom sees his worker, the latter child may feel insecure and insignificant.

An example of problems for foster parents occurs when several workers, and perhaps a parent aide, establish natural family visits for various children in a home with little reference to the foster family's schedule and little co-ordination between the participants. In part, this would be alleviated if there were sufficient resources to enable fewer placements per home.

On the other hand, continuity for children can suffer if the natural family's worker is not involved with the child and her foster parents. The child may feel her connection with her natural family is gone if the family's worker doesn't continue to be the child's worker. Also, the child must develop new relationships with both the foster family and new worker. A child care worker may, however, have the knowledge and skills to better support the child and foster family.

Balancing the many needs and interests in establishing the most effective delivery system has been and continues to be a major issue, according to field staff.

In both meetings and interviews, the inability to have overlap when worker changes occur, the existence of vacant positions and use of temporary staff were identified as serious deficiencies in service provision. One extreme example cited was four temporary staff rotating through one caseload in three months. The team is concerned that such examples portray a system wherein continuity, relationship building, planning and meeting needs of children and families are not priorities.

Some analysis of staffing related to foster parent satisfaction with services was undertaken. It appears there is greater foster parent satisfaction when staff continuity, clarity of roles, support and frequent contact are in evidence.

Staff job sharing was raised as an issue by foster parents in some locations. Regardless of the quality of the staff, the inability to reach the worker who only works on certain days or the lack of continuity when dealing with different staff was expressed as a concern.

Small sub-offices with very few staff have to contend with other problems. Generalized caseloads are necessary, because there may be only one or two workers for all

programs. Generalized caseloads can include child protection, unmarried parents, children in care, teen parent, foster home, adoption and at times Young Offender responsibilities. Child protection and Young Offender services, by reason of risk to the child or community, must take precedence. Distance is a major problem, particularly in the north where generalized caseloads combined with vast distances, few resources and services cause severe stress for all concerned. After hour services often prove difficult to provide. In addition, the staff are isolated and do not have the collegial supports that exist in larger offices.

Many foster parents and staff recommended changes in the system. Some suggested the department consider having more specialized staff, even if these staff have larger areas to cover.

Position vacancies and the time required to recruit new staff are issues raised by both staff and foster parents. It is particularly acute in the north since cover-off is very difficult due to distance and the limited number of staff. Also, recruitment of appropriate, qualified staff for northern areas can be a major problem. It was recommended that innovative action be undertaken to deal with these issues.

Workload size is regarded as a major problem by both staff and foster parents. Even when foster parents complain about the lack of adequate service, they usually qualify their comments by stating that most workers are doing the best they can, considering the size of the workload.

The workers interviewed regarding the adolescent sample were asked to identify the components of their workload. A sample of 18 workloads, including both rural and urban workers, is attached in Appendix D. A few of the more startling examples are:

- worker #4 responsible for 71 children in care and 30 foster homes.
- worker #15 responsible for 36 children in care, 17 foster homes, 14 child protection, 3 unmarried parents and 33 Young Offender cases.
- worker #17 responsible for 14 children in care, 1 foster home, 15 child protection, 5 unmarried parents, 10 adoption homes and 16 Young Offenders.

The team is concerned as to the level and quality of service that can be provided under these circumstances. For worker #4, sheer numbers would prevent the worker from providing other than a minimal level or a crisis oriented service.

The program knowledge and skills required by workers #15 and #17 coupled with the number of cases creates a serious situation for all concerned. The stress level for the workers can contribute to many problems including communication breakdown, service omissions, poor staff morale and worker turnover.

While the three examples cited are at the high end of the scale, the remaining fifteen, as charted in Appendix D, give rise to concern as to size of workload and range of worker expertise required.

The team was also informed of the changing relationships in the provision of services to Indians on reserves. Some bands are seeking involvement in planning and undertaking care of their children. Staff are also exploring the potential of placing children with extended families, recruiting foster homes and providing other services at band request. In addition, there has been a marked increase in requests from other provinces for service of court documents, home assessments and ongoing supervision of children returned to the reserve.

In some areas good working relationships have been established between band personnel and district staff. The movement towards integrated working relationships with bands is viewed positively by staff. However, it requires the development of trusting relationships and establishment of networks, which takes time and adds to the complexity of service delivery. Staff believe that to do this work adequately, it must be recognized in workload standards.

The team believes the issues of workload standards, staff turnover, organization of staff assignment in child and family services and the impact of evolving Indian child welfare services must be addressed. In addition, recruitment and retention of staff in northern areas requires special attention. There is no simple answer to rationalization of the service delivery system given the diversity in the province. However, reconciliation of workloads with roles and expectations and the service delivery system is key to future effective program delivery.

7.7 Records and Files

Quality of departmental record-keeping regarding children in care and foster homes was evaluated through a review of 101 child in care files. The corresponding foster home files (94) were also reviewed.

A copy of the foster home study report is available in 67 of the 94 foster home files. Thirty (30) of these home studies were completed prior to 1980. According to file information, one or more reassessments had been completed on 43 foster homes.

Only 44 of 101 child in care files contained a social history of the child and his natural family. Children's records were also reviewed to determine how well the child's needs are being met by the foster parents or other caregivers, school system, health care system and community agencies. In a number of instances, the file recordings were done with regularity, and with concise and pertinent content. This enabled the reviewers to have a clear sense of the child's current functioning, progress and planning. These good practices were also reflected in some foster home files.

A finding of some concern was the frequency with which the reviewers were unable to assess how well children's needs are met due to lack of file information. For example, in 32 files it was not possible to assess how well needs are met by the current foster parents. In health care, no assessment was possible for 66 files. Of the 101 files, 38 do not have the date of the last medical contact. Of 82 school age children, the records do not indicate the type of school attended for nine children and the level of the child's school functioning is not noted in 34 files.

This lack of information is serious in and of itself, and even more so when viewed in relation to staff turnover. Thirty two (32) of the children had only one worker in the previous two years or since they came into care, whichever is less. However, 27 have had two workers, 26 have had three workers, while the remaining 16 children have had from four to seven workers in that time frame. These caseload changes cause severe disruption to relationships among all parties. Without pertinent information on files, it is extremely difficult for staff to know the circumstances of children and foster families and to address needs on a planned basis.

In 38 of the foster home files there is no summary recording within the previous 12 months. This also applies to 34 child in care files.

Evidence of supervisory comment and consultation, is apparent in less than 50% of child in care and foster home files reviewed.

The team recognizes there may be numerous reasons in

addition to staff turnover for the deficiencies in file recordings. Through staff meetings as well as file review, it is evident that social workers have many administrative and clerical tasks occasioned by the lack of clerical support staff. Special needs payment processing, completion of all documentation when a child enters care and form duplication are examples of items that take worker time away from social work. Consequently, contact with and support of children and foster families, as well as case management and appropriate recording are neglected.

In conclusion existing file recording standards are not generally being met across the province. Planning and quality of care for children are jeopardized as a result.

7.8 Compensation

The current financial package for foster parents consists of a basic rate, special needs and fee-for-service payments.

Basic Rates

Included in the basic rate are amounts for maintenance, clothing and spending money. The monthly rates as of April 1, 1986 are stated in Table 13 below.

Table 13

Basic Rates

	Children 0 - 4 yrs.	Children 5 - 12 yrs.	Children 13 yrs. & Over
Maintenance	$193.40	$215.20	$233.90
Clothing	22.70	29.20	40.60
Spending	3.90	11.60	17.50
Total	220.00	256.00	292.00

At meetings, many foster parents stated these rates are inadequate to meet their costs and must be supplemented by them. Most frequently identified as inadequate were rates for infants, clothing and spending money for older children, especially adolescents. In the northern areas of the province, much concern was expressed because there is no differential payment to cover the increased cost of food and clothing. Staff also noted underfunding of these items.

Foster parents identified the need for an additional age category, citing the marked difference in needs and expenditures between a five year old and 12 year old.

Foster parents were asked by questionnaire to estimate their actual costs for a typical child in each age range for the three basic rate areas. Tables 14 to 16 show the various rate levels for maintenance, clothing and spending money, identified by foster parents, as reflecting their actual costs.

Table 14

Levels of Maintenance Rates

Based on Foster Parents Estimated Costs

AGE RANGES

	0 - 4 yrs.		5 - 12 yrs.		Over 12 yrs.	
Existing Rates	$193.40		$215.20		$233.90	
Estimated Costs	No.	(Percent)	No.	(Percent)	No.	(Percent)
Less than $199	7	(8%)	--		1	(.1%)
$200 - 249	42	(51%)	23	(26%)	16	(12%)
$250 - 299	23	(28%)	29	(33%)	39	(29%)
$300 - 349	5	(6%)	21	(24%)	35	(26%)
$350 - 399	3	(4%)	5	(6%)	21	(16%)
$400 - 449	3	(4%)	9	(10%)	9	(7%)
Over $450	--	--	2	(2%)	13	(10%)
*Total Responses	83	(101%)	89	(101%)	134	(101%)

Table 15

Estimated Costs for Clothing

Existing Rates	0 - 4 yrs. $22.70		5 - 12 yrs. $29.20		Over 12 $40.60	
Estimated Costs						
Less than $25	9	(10%)	2	(2%)	3	(2%)
$26 - $35	46	(49%)	26	(26%)	1	(1%)
$36 - $45	17	(18%)	29	(29%)	24	(13%)
$46 - $55	16	(16%)	33	(33%)	46	(33%)
$56 - $65	4	(4%)	7	(7%)	29	(21%)
$66 - $75	2	(2%)	3	(3%)	21	(15%)
$75 +	1	(1%)	0	(0%)	14	(10%)
*Total Responses	94	(100%)	100	(100%)	138	(99%)

Table 16

Estimated Spending Money*

Existing Rates	0 - 4 yrs. $3.90		5 - 12 yrs. $11.60		Over 12 $17.50	
Estimated Costs						
Less than $10	43	(57%)	1	(1%)	1	(1%)
$10 - $20	28	(37%	76	(78%)	40	(28%)
$21 - $30	2	(3%)	17	(18%)	67	(46%)
$31 - $40	1	(1%)	2	(2%)	24	(17%)
$41 - $50	1	(1%)	1	(1%)	9	(6%)
$51 - $60	0	(0%)	0	--	1	(1%)
$60 +	0	(0%)	0	--	1	(1%)
*Total Responses	75	(99%)	97	(100%)	144	(101%)

*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

Emergency rates, paid to receiving homes or other foster parents for a time-limited period upon an emergency placement, were also identified as problematic. The major issue is lack of consistency between districts as to what constitutes an emergency placement and the length of time for which the rates are paid.

Special Needs

Special needs payments are made for a variety of items, ranging from activity and lesson fees, initial clothing upon entry to care through to travel costs related to a child's special needs. Actual costs are paid.

Many of the issues in special needs, identified as problematic by staff and foster parents, relate to the administrative process and timing of payments rather than to the amount of funds. There are some exceptions. One exception is in the amount of clothing money provided upon initial entry to care. Funding is especially inadequate if winter clothing must be purchased.

On occasion, it appears that expenditures for some special needs are not discussed among worker, child, foster parents and natural parents to determine an amount that would be reasonable over a given period. This does not contribute to children learning about money management. It can also create problems for children and their natural parents when the children return home. One of the natural parents interviewed provided an example of these difficulties. This parent feels the department should not provide all "services" if natural parents are capable of providing necessities. The parent stated responsibilities are taken away from the parent while the system does not provide guidance, development of self discipline, responsibilities and values. This parent believes the approach taken is contributing to a "give me" mentality in the child.

A specific allowance is paid for permanent wards and is intended for such items as admissions to special events, purchase of toys, play equipment or musical instruments and expenses incurred on holiday excursions within the province. The allowance is called a fixed continuous discretionary allowance and is paid regularly at the following monthly rates:

0 - 4 years	- $15.50
5 - 12 years	- $21.40
13 years and over	- $26.75

Payment for similar items of special need may be made for children in care by agreements or temporary orders, but payment must be approved individually.

Foster parents and staff expressed dissatisfaction with the perceived unfairness of this allowance. They believe needs and expenditures are similar for children regardless of the

child's legal status. The preferred approach is to make the allowance available to all children in care.

The department has a policy to enable compensation for damage caused by a child in care. However, both staff and foster parents see it as a cumbersome and subjective approach which is open to inconsistent application. Guidelines for staff and foster parents are not clear as to items for compensation. This is further complicated by increases in insurance rates, especially if claims against insurance are processed. More foster parents are looking to the department for payment.

Staff feel uncomfortable with the role of "insurance adjustor". Also, the approval and payment process is complex and results in payment delays.

A comprehensive insurance scheme for foster parents was suggested by some foster parents to address the issue of compensation. The coverage would be designed specifically for foster homes and all approved foster parents would be eligible. This approach has been undertaken by other jurisdictions and is supported by staff.

Fee-for-Service

The fee-for-service payment system was established to enable the department to compensate foster parents for services provided to meet the individual needs of each child. This system was developed in consultation with the S.F.P.A. and revised in 1983. However, in the foster parent questionnaire, 18% of foster parents indicate that this payment system has not been explained to them.

The fee for service process was intended to focus on the services provided by the foster parent, based upon the needs of the child. However, in meetings it was stated that all too often the child's needs are high-lighted with little indication as to the services undertaken by the foster parent to meet the needs. It is seen as a negative incentive, in that if services provided are successful and the child requires fewer services, the fee is reduced. This is particularly a problem since it appears that fee-for-service payments are sometimes viewed by staff and foster parents as a necessary supplement to inadequate maintenance payments.

Various suggestions for a new system were made. One approach, recommended by many foster parent locals and staff, is to relate the payment made for services to foster parent training and level of competence. This approach to compensation for services would tend to professionalize

foster care and more adequately meet the needs of children in care. Inherent in the system would be the need to ensure selection of an appropriate placement for each child. This presumes that a range of placement resources will be available.

Contracting with the foster parents for each placement was also suggested in some meetings. Contracts would delineate responsibilities and service expectations of all parties, as well as payment and other items relevant to the placement.

Many staff and foster parents believe a more professionalized foster care system is desireable to meet the needs of many children in care. Compensation for foster parents based on skills and training, a collegial approach between staff and foster parents as well as formalized contracts are seen as ways to achieve this goal. However, some foster parents expressed concern that professionalization could be detrimental to the philosophy of caring for children, and therefore felt adequate maintenance rates were more desirable.

The team felt there was consensus that the fee-for-service system must be revised but a definitive solution will require further work between the department and S.F.P.A.

The team believes substantive modifications are necessary in compensation for foster care services. Basic rates are considered to be inadequate to meet the costs of raising a child. The fee for service system was introduced to compensate foster parents for special services provided to meet the individualized needs of children. It is not sufficiently meeting its objectives due to various problems identified.

A new and comprehensive system of compensation for foster care services is required. Such a system must derive from program needs and include a competency-based approach to service and payment. Design of the system will be a major undertaking and a strategy for gradual implementation will be necessary.

7.9 Administration

A number of the administrative issues and problems that were identified in the review have been mentioned throughout this report. Concerns expressed by foster parents are fairly consistent throughout the province. These are summarized below.

Timing of all payments is a major concern in most parts of the province. The exception is in the northern areas where child care payments are issued by the local offices. In all other areas, the time lag between placement and payment for basic rates is an issue since payments are retroactive and foster parents must wait until the middle of the month after placement to receive payment.

Another problem is the lack of information contained in the cheque stubs. The information is confined to the name of the child and the dates wherein the service was provided but does not break out specific items, e.g., maintenance, special needs and fee-for-service. This, coupled with the lengthy delays in receiving payment, causes confusion for foster parents and additional work for staff to identify the items for which payment has been made. There are also problems related to making advance payments when the cost of special needs are known in advance.

Departmental staff agree these items are problematic for foster parents and staff. The irritation they cause may damage relationships and are time consuming for all.

Child care requisitions are also viewed as problematic by staff and foster parents. Both groups believe requisitions contribute to a poor self-image for children as well as for foster parents. In addition, some retailers refuse to accept them due to delays in payment. Requisitions limit the ability to "shop around" for the best buys and identify the child as a "foster child".

Social work staff experience problems due to form duplication, the excessive amount of time spent in clerical and administrative tasks, and lack of an integrated payment and information system.

In June, 1986 the department established a subcommittee of the Child in Care Review to address the many administrative problems identified by the team. This early action was taken due to the concerns expressed in meetings and the concensus among foster parents and staff regarding the need for major revisions to the system.

The subcommittee is working on those issues which can be resolved in the short term, as well as identifying long term initiatives.

Examples of activities undertaken to address some of the problems include:

- development of a mechanism to enable immediate payment for a number of special need items;

- update of the special need expenditure guidelines;
- a major review of child care administrative forms and procedures to streamline the system;
- amalgamation of client index registration and payment forms to avoid duplication and to ensure accurate statistical information.

Departmental staff identified the deficiencies which result from the lack of a comprehensive integrated program information and payment system. The lack of timely and detailed fiscal information tied to specific program components impairs the department's ability to monitor existing programs and project future needs and directions.

The administrative subcommittee is working to address existing problems in the short term, but with a view to these solutions being incorporated with the comprehensive information and payment system that is required.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Family Support Services

Community services specifically designed to support families and assist parents in meeting the needs of their children are not readily available throughout the province. These services are essential for troubled families to reduce the need to bring children into care.

Recommendations:

1. That departmental staff work with community organizations to identify needs and priorize services which provide direct supports to troubled families.

2. That all government departments funding non-government organizations give priority to those organizations providing support services to children and families.

Extended families and other concerned persons frequently express an interest and willingness to undertake the ongoing care of children who are at risk of coming into care. At present, no program exists to provide the financial and particular supports necessary to facilitate this option for care within the family.

3. That the department develop a program option to assist extended families to care for children and alleviate the necessity for the children to come into care.

Program Direction

A major deficiency in the child in care program is the lack of a philosophy to provide direction in the development and operation of a comprehensive service.

Recommendations:

4. That a clear statement of philosophy and purpose for child in care services be developed by the department, consistent with the philosophy of family support services.

5. That the definition recognize the adoption program as part of the continuum of child in care services.

Foster care, as a key component of child in care services, requires clear definition as to its purpose and function. The existing program and resources are not capable of meeting the differing needs of children in care.

Recommendations:

6. That the objectives and characteristics of the foster care program be delineated by the department.

7. That the department develop a clear description of staff roles and responsibilities in child in care services including the specific functions in foster care.

8. That the department in conjunction with the S.F.P.A. develop a clear description of the roles and responsibilities of foster parents, that flow from the objectives and characteristics of the child in care program.

9. That the program have defined standards of care and service.

10. That the program description include the required range of foster homes to meet the individual needs of children.

11. That within the program there be the opportunity for the development of specialized resources.

12. That the department enter into contracts with foster parents on behalf of each child placed in their care.

13. That the contract define mutual expectations, obligations and compensation.

Planning For Children

Case planning is a vital base of service in which several major problems are evident. Planning is not occurring in a consistent and goal directed manner in all cases, and does not regularly involve all parties concerned.

Recommendations:

14. That the department develop mechanisms to ensure that whenever possible, case planning commence prior to the child entering care and continue throughout placement and discharge.

15. That case planning mechanisms ensure the opportunity for participation of all relevant parties including the child, natural parents, caregivers, social workers and others significant to the child.

16. That provision be made for regular monitoring to ensure planning occurs and action is taken to achieve the established goals.

17. That for children entering permanent care, establishment of the best alternative to achieve permanence be formulated prior to permanent committal.

18. That plans and goals as well as activity and progress to achieve the goals are documented on the appropriate files.

Services to Indian and Native Children

Given that 42% of children in care are status Indian and a further 26% are non-status or Metis, a large proportion of the children are in placements where caregivers do not share their racial, cultural and linguistic heritage.

Recommendations:

19. That the discussions and negotiations underway involving Indian bands, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the department, leading to the development of on reserve Indian child and family service agreements, be a priority.

20. That pending the completion of agreements that the department establish an interim policy to enable a more effective working relationship with Indian bands.

21. That the interim policy require that bands be consulted and involved in planning for children entering care.

22. That existing programs operated by Indian and native organizations, which assist in maintaining and reunifying natural families, not only be supported by the department but that new initiatives be actively encouraged.

23. That the department and the S.F.P.A. work jointly with Indian bands and native organizations to recruit, develop and support Indian and native foster and adoption homes.

24. That the department and the S.F.P.A. actively facilitate opportunities for Indian and native children in care to develop and retain their racial and cultural identity.

25. That foster parents, other caregivers and staff providing care and services to Indian and native

children and their families, have access to and be required to attend workshops on cultural awareness.

Resources

The major resource problems pertain to an insufficient number of resources and lack of an appropriate range of regular and specialized resources, both locally and provincially. As a result a number of children are in placements which do not adequately meet their special needs. In addition, specialized services provided by other government departments and community agencies are not consistently available.

Recommendations:

26. That the establishment of an assessment, stabilization and treatment facility in Saskatoon proceed immediately.

27. That the planned reinstatement of Dales House in Regina as a Family Services facility be carried out at the earliest possible date.

28. That an immediate review of specialized group home resources be undertaken to determine the potential for more effective use and expansion of the program.

29. That an analysis of specialized family-based resources, namely Parent Therapist, Transitional Adolescent Parenting Service (T.A.P.S.) and Melfort's special treatment home model, be undertaken to determine relevance and appropriate usage of each.

30. That, based on the analysis of both the group home and other specialized resources, appropriate expansion of these models occur.

31. That a review of emergency receiving resources and the services therein be undertaken to determine the extent of need as well as to establish standards for practise.

32. That a range of services and resources for youth be developed to meet their emerging independence needs which include life skills, career, employment and educational planning, and independent living options.

33. That specialized services and resources for treatment of children of all ages with severe emotional and behavioral problems be developed, including services and resources for children exhibiting aggressive, violent and destructive behaviors.

34. That specific services and resources be developed for the care and treatment of children who have been sexually abused.

35. That services be developed for the treatment of children who are perpetrators of sexual assault.

36. That compilation and analysis of data obtained in the review regarding the severely handicapped children be undertaken to determine if expansion of the Regina Pilot Project with Rehabilitation Services is desirable.

37. That the Family Support and Rehabilitation Services Divisions work jointly to ensure availability of required services and supports for handicapped children in care and their caregivers throughout the province.

38. That specialized programs for youth and their families, such as crisis services and time out homes, be developed.

39. That resources be established to meet the needs of teen mothers in care who require support in parenting their children.

40. That specialized resources and services be developed with a view to meeting needs of children at the local level.

41. That the department and the S.F.P.A. actively work with community groups, agencies and other government departments to develop and provide the services required for children in care.

Supports for Foster Parenting

Services needed to support foster parents in meeting the needs of children are insufficient. While numerous recommendations speak to support for caregivers and children, the following are specific to foster parenting.

Recommendations:

42. That the S.F.P.A. and department work to define the information required by foster parents and other caregivers at the time of a child's placement, including the development of a standard format for provision of the information.

43. That the S.F.P.A. and department outline the case

information which needs to be shared on an ongoing basis between foster parents and the social worker.

44. That the department provide a clear policy pertaining to confidentiality of case information which will include the requirement that all caregivers sign an oath of confidentiality.

45. That the respite policy be extended to foster parents providing care to children with serious emotional and behavioral problems.

46. That respite services and resources be developed throughout the province to which foster parents can have regular access.

47. That the S.F.P.A. and the department encourage the development of support systems, such as network and "buddy" systems, organized at the local level and designed to meet specific needs.

48. That a supportive network be developed between specialized resource facilities, foster homes and other resources which would enable continuity of care for children and support for caregivers.

49. That a relevant, comprehensive foster parent manual be developed jointly by the S.F.P.A. and the department with an established system to ensure regular updating.

Training for Foster Parents

The current child in care system, which includes the foster care program, is not meeting the specialized needs of many children in care. Training for foster parents is fragmented, is not standardized and is not providing the knowledge and skill development required for foster parents.

Recommendations:

50. That the department, in conjunction with the S.F.P.A., develop a standard, mandatory orientation package for foster parents.

51. That the orientation package clearly outline the role and expectations of foster parents to enable self-assessment, preparation for the job and provide a sound basis for continuing training.

52. That orientation be provided jointly by experienced foster parents and staff.

53. That a standardized training package for the continuing development of knowledge and skills of caregivers be established and provided throughout the province by the department and the S.F.P.A.

54. That the training package consist of modules, some of which will be identified as mandatory, for all foster parents.

55. That some training modules be designed to enable foster parents to increase their knowledge and expertise in specialized areas.

56. That existing training modules from other jurisdictions be adapted and amalgamated with Saskatchewan based material.

57. That the department provide funding for babysitting and transportation costs incurred when foster parents participate in approved training programs.

58. That the approved rates and process for such payments be developed by the department in conjunction with the S.F.P.A.

59. That orientation and training modules be made available to adoptive applicants and adoptive parents.

Saskatchewan Foster Parents Association

The S.F.P.A. experiences limited participation of its membership and a restricted capacity to meet its established objectives. Communication between the association and the department is irregular and lacks a standard procedure for sharing information.

Recommendations:

60. That based on its objectives the S.F.P.A. establish goals to meet the needs of its membership.

61. That the Association priorize the issues identified by its membership, develop and put forward solutions which have been approved by the membership.

62. That the S.F.P.A. work with the department to ensure participation in the assessment, orientation and ongoing support of new and existing foster parents.

63. That the Association, in conjunction with the department, develop recognized channels of

communication between all levels of the two organizations.

64. That the Association and department identify the policy and administrative information which must be exchanged on an ongoing basis to enable a productive partnership.

65. That the Association review the format, content and frequency of publication of newsletters, both provincially and locally, to respond more effectively to the needs of its membership.

Service Delivery System

Departmental service delivery systems have evolved over time in response to provincial constraints and local needs. This has resulted in significant variations in the standard of child and family services provided throughout the province.

Recommendations:

66. That the department review the service delivery system to rationalize the standard of services throughout the province.

67. That such review and resultant action be based on the principle of continuity of care and relationships for children, yet have regard to the number of workers involved with each foster home.

68. That the department review the management of staff job sharing to ensure that supports and services are consistently available to children in care and foster parents.

69. That the department revise workload standards for social workers to enable staff to meet program requirements.

70. That the supervisor-worker ratio be amended to recognize the need to improve program and staff management.

71. That revised workload standards for supervisors and workers take into account the urban-rural variations, such as distance, time and the ability to specialize caseloads.

72. That the social worker - clerical staffing ratio be amended to enable clerical personnel to carry out all administrative and clerical functions.

73. That government develop and implement incentives to retain skilled, experienced staff and reduce staff turnover.

74. That specific initiatives be undertaken by government to recruit, train and retain staff in northern districts.

75. That efforts to fulfill the goal of the Affirmative Action policy, for recruitment of Indian and native staff, be strengthened.

76. That the department take steps to minimize disruptions when worker changes occur, which includes reduction of staff vacancies in child care services.

Training for Staff

Orientation and continuing training for staff providing child in care services, including adoption, is neither standardized nor as comprehensive as required. A professional service cannot be provided without adequately trained staff.

Recommendations:

77. That the department make a commitment to increase the number of professionally trained social work staff in child and family services by establishing specific time-related objectives.

78. That the department standardize a mandatory orientation package for staff entering child in care services.

79. That the department develop and provide a mandatory basic training program in child in care services of at least three weeks duration, for supervisors and staff.

80. That the training package incorporate material from other jurisdictions with training modules developed in Saskatchewan.

81. That experienced foster parents assist to develop and provide child in care staff training, in areas related to foster care.

82. That training packages include both program knowledge and skill development on the topics which have been identified by staff and foster parents.

83. That the department work with the Faculty of Social

Work, University of Regina, to identify professional knowledge and skills necessary in child and family services, to enrich educational opportunities.

84. That in areas related to common needs, staff and foster parents jointly participate in training sessions.

85. That supervisors be provided with special training in management and administration of child and family services programs.

86. That the department ensure a definitive, current manual be available to all staff with an established system for regular updating.

Staff Support for Children in Care

Children in care require individual support and assistance in dealing with their feelings and special needs. A number of children, foster parents and staff believe the children are not receiving the necessary professional guidance.

Recommendations:

87. That the purpose of contact between social worker and child be clearly stated and incorporated in training for staff and foster parents.

88. That the department ensure existing standards for contact with children are met.

89. That the department reassess and revise as necessary the standards for worker contact with children to ensure their needs for support and services are met.

90. That the purpose and use of memory books, as a tool for workers and foster parents to assist each child in dealing with his past experiences and his feelings about these experiences, be reaffirmed.

91. That additional support and treatment techniques for children be initiated, which may include peer support groups, buddy systems and group work.

Home Studies and Reassessments

The content and process of home studies lacks uniformity, does not promote self-assessment and does not address all necessary aspects to ensure the safety and well-being of children. Also, home studies have not been completed with all foster parents. These problems also exist in relation to updates and reassessments of foster homes.

Recommendations:

92. That the department ensure a home study is completed with every foster family prior to placement of a child.

93. That in the case of placement of children in care with relatives, a home study be completed within three months following placement.

94. That the content and process of the foster and the adoption home study be redesigned to sustain the educational and self-assessment approach commenced in the initial orientation program.

95. That, subject to policy, a joint determination of the type of child and maximum number of children in that home be established during the home study and during each reassessment.

96. That a policy be established regarding criminal record checks for foster parents, adoptive parents and staff, prior to approval or employment.

97. That upon completion of a foster or adoption home study report, the report be shared with the applicants for joint sign-off.

98. That the S.F.P.A. and department establish a process for an annual joint evaluation between the foster parent and social worker to assess the service satisfaction of both parties.

99. That the evaluation process also be used to establish objectives for the coming year.

100. That in addition to annual evaluations, assessments be undertaken following any major change in the family, (i.e., family composition or relocation).

101. That the department and S.F.P.A. develop a process to review and resolve major conflicts that arise between individual foster parents and the department, such as closure of a home or removal of a child.

Standards for Quality of Care

Standards have not been developed in several key areas relating to quality of care. In addition, several existing standards require revision to protect and meet the needs of children.

Recommendations:

102. That the department modify the policy on the number of children in a foster or adoption home by reducing the maximum allowed.

103. That guidelines be established for individual limitations on number of children based on the size of the home, special needs and ages of children and the ability of the foster parents to meet the individualized needs of the children.

104. That the policy on the number of children provide for exceptions to accommodate sibling groups and placement of children related to foster or adoptive parents.

105. That the department and S.F.P.A. develop guidelines for foster parents to meet the basic nutritional requirements of children as well as the special dietary needs of individual children.

106. That the department and S.F.P.A. establish home safety standards and guidelines, related to fire, health and physical safety.

107. That standards regarding medical attention for children entering care be upgraded.

108. That the department update the manner in which it assures the medical and dental needs of children are being met.

109. That all children in care have access to accredited educational programs that correspond with their aptitudes and abilities.

Discipline

The department has not provided staff and foster parents with the direction, support and training to ensure positive child management practices are in place. This has resulted in a perceived over-reliance on corporal punishment as a disciplinary technique.

Recommendations:

110. That a well defined policy and direction in child management be established by the department.

111. That the policy reflect:

- reinforcement of a positive self image
- the fact that children come from troubled, often violent, backgrounds
- the fact that children may have experienced several placements with different value systems and expectations.

112. That the policy clearly define acceptable and unacceptable child management practices, based upon a positive approach to discipline for children in care.

113. That staff and caregivers be given support and educational opportunities in approved child management approaches.

Investigations of Abuse Allegations

The lack of understanding of the basis and procedures for investigations of abuse allegations in foster homes and other resources has resulted in fear and resentment on the part of some foster parents. This has the potential for causing further upset for children and damaging relationships among foster parents and staff.

Recommendations:

114. That the policy and procedures respecting the allegations of abuse in foster care be finalized and made available to all foster parents and departmental staff at the earliest possible date.

115. That the policies and procedures respecting investigations of abuse in other child in care resources be reviewed and updated.

Financial Remuneration for Foster Care

The existing payment system in foster care has several components, is very complex and requires an inordinate amount of time to administer. Many of the guidelines permit subjective interpretation which results in inequities within the system. The payment provides limited incentive for knowledge and skill development by the caregiver and does not encourage recognition of a child's progress.

Recommendations:

116. That a comprehensive payment system be designed that not only includes basic rates and special needs, but recognizes the training, skill and experience of the caregiver.

117. That this comprehensive payment system be developed by the department in conjunction with the S.F.P.A.

118. That the system be introduced in phases as foster parent training opportunities become available and a model for competency-based assessment is established.

119. That pending the development and establishment of the new system, the existing payment system, including basic rates, special needs and fee-for-service, be improved to meet present needs.

Basic Rates

Basic foster care rates are not adequate to meet the costs incurred for the maintenance of foster children. The rates do not take into consideration the extra costs, such as water, electricity, wear on household appliances, resulting from an additional member in the household.

Recommendations:

120. That realistic rates for clothing and spending money, that are age related, be developed for children in care.

121. That the maintenance rates be reassessed with a view to establishing actual costs for food, personal items and additional household expenses incurred with additional household members.

122. That the basic rate scale established be indexed to the cost of living.

123. That the basic rates established for children in care in northern districts reflect costs related to living in the north.

124. That pending the reassessment of all basic rates, an interim increase be provided.

125. That the department review the emergency rates in terms of adequacy of placement, length of time payment is in effect and consistency of application throughout the province.

Special Needs

The major problems in special needs payments relate to inconsistency of application, lack of rationalization with basic rates and delays in processing payments. In addition, the funding level for some items is not adequate.

Recommendations:

126. That all expenditure items of a continuous nature be included in basic rates.

127. That guidelines for special need expenditures be updated and made available to all foster parents and staff.

128. That the department incorporate the fixed continuous discretionary allowance with the basic rates for all children, thereby recognizing the needs met through this allowance are common to all children in care.

129. That the policy and guidelines be reviewed, with the objective of establishing realistic funding for items such as initial and seasonal clothing allowances, Christmas allowances, holiday and graduation expenses.

130. That the administrative process for approval and payment be adjusted to facilitate prompt payment.

Fee-for-Service Payments

The fee for service system is open to subjective interpretation which tends to focus upon the problems of the children rather than emphasizing and ensuring that the services required are being provided.

Pending introduction of a new system, some adjustments are necessary to improve relevance, adequacy and consistency of application.

Recommendations:

131. That the components of fee-for-service be reviewed to ensure recognition of children's special needs and to ensure that the special services required are being provided by the foster parents.

132. That the level of remuneration in fee-for-service be reviewed as to adequacy.

133. That the "grandfathering clause" of the fee-for-service be re-examined.

Compensation for Damage

The current policy and system with respect to compensation for damage is inappropriate since it limits payments to specific situations, is subjective in assessing claims and

is cumbersome in method of payment. Specific expertise is required to assess claims and determine compensation for loss or damage to property. This is not an appropriate function for the Department of Social Services.

Recommendations:

134. That the department and the S.F.P.A. ensure an appropriate insurance package is available for all foster parents.

Public Awareness

Public knowledge and understanding of the needs of children in care and foster care services are lacking and contribute to the lack of support for the program. This impairs the department's ability to recruit and retain appropriate child in care resources. Neither the S.F.P.A. nor the department have been successful in promoting the creation of an accepting and supportive environment for child in care services.

Recommendations:

135. That a comprehensive public awareness program be undertaken to inform the public of the needs of the children, the purpose of the foster care program, and the role and responsibilities of foster parents.

136. That the involvement of individuals, community organizations and agencies be sought to assist in developing this awareness and advocating for the support of child in care services.

137. That the department develop promotional materials which describe the program and the needs of the children, with a view to recruitment of suitable foster parents.

138. That, to enhance the image of foster care and to promote recruitment of potential foster parents, the S.F.P.A. develop information packages on foster care and on its functions as an Association.

Records

File recording and documentation standards are not consistently being met. This creates major problems in continuity of care, consistency of planning and assessment of progress towards established goals for children and foster parents.

Recommendations:

139. That the department ensure all staff are aware of the indispensible nature of timely, concise and appropriate file recording.

140. That the department establish a monitoring system to ensure adherence to file recording standards.

141. That to facilitate case management the department examine the format and structure of child care program files with a view to standardizing the organization of various file materials.

Administration

The present administrative system creates problems for both foster parents and staff. In addition, there is a lack of statistical information required for efficient program management.

Recommendations:

142. That the department initiate action to ensure, to the degree possible, the payment system is timely and responds to the needs of foster parents.

143. That the department determine the feasibility and options available to provide specific identification of payments made to foster parents.

144. That the department develop a system for advance payment of many special need items.

145. That the department take action to reduce form duplication and to simplify administrative tasks for staff.

146. That the department design and implement an integrated child care payment and information system.

IMPLEMENTATION

The review team recognizes it is not possible to implement all the recommendations immediately. Many of the recommendations relate to areas that require further development, such as training, public education and recruitment strategies. Others require the full involvement of many participants, including Indian bands, Indian and native organizations, other government departments, non-government organizations, and the Saskatchewan Foster Parents Association as well as departmental staff. Still other recommendations relate to very specific items that, if addressed, could enhance adequacy and consistency of communication and services.

The review team believes it is essential for the department to designate an implementation team to establish priorities, direct the development of programs and service initiatives, assign resources and monitor progress. Nevertheless, the review team recommends the following broad priorities:

- establish the program philosophy and role descriptions
- develop and provide initial training initiatives for foster parents and staff
- increase basic foster care rate increases in specific areas pending design of a competency-based payment system
- develop specialized resources and services to meet the needs of youth and children with specific special needs, beginning with the most critical areas
- develop initiatives to better meet the needs of Indian and native children in care
- inform the community about child in care and foster care programs through improved public education
- develop an administrative and service delivery system that supports the foster care program

Although these priorities are recommended, all the areas identified must be addressed if the foster care program is to meet the needs of the children in care.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The number of questionnaires mailed is higher than the number of foster homes listed because some Saskatchewan Foster Parents Association mailing lists included Rehabilitation Services homes for adults.

2. Hornby, Helaine C. and Mary I. Collins "Teenagers in Foster Care: The Forgotten Majority". Children and Youth Services Review, 3 (1981), page 17.

3. Ibid., page 18.

4. Thorpe, Rosamund, "The Experience of Children and Parents Living Apart: Implications and Guidelines for Practice", New Developments in Foster Care and Adoption, edited by John Triseliotis, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1980, page 92.

5. Evaluation of Planning Committees in Saskatchewan, internal review completed by Planning and Evaluation Branch, Saskatchewan Social Services, 1983.

6. Pasztor, Eileen Mayers and Elyse M. Burgess, "Finding and Keeping More Foster Parents", Children Today (1982), page 2.

7. Ibid.
   See also:
   Pasztor, Eileen Mayers, "Permanency Planning and Foster Parenting: Implications for Recruitment, Selection, Training and Retention", Children and Youth Services Review 7 (1985).

8. Campbell, Janet and George Maslany, A Literature Review of Services to Children in Care, Prepared for Saskatchewan Social Services by the Social Administration Unit, Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina, 1986, page 44.

   See also:
   McFadden, Emily J., Working with Natural Families, Ypsilanti, Michigan: Foster Parent Education Program, Eastern Michigan University, 1980 and

   BCFFPA, Foster Care Training: Working With the Foster Child's Family System, Vancouver: BCFFPA, 1985.

9. The Troubador, newsletter of the Saskatchewan Foster Parents Association, (S.F.P.A.), February, 1986.

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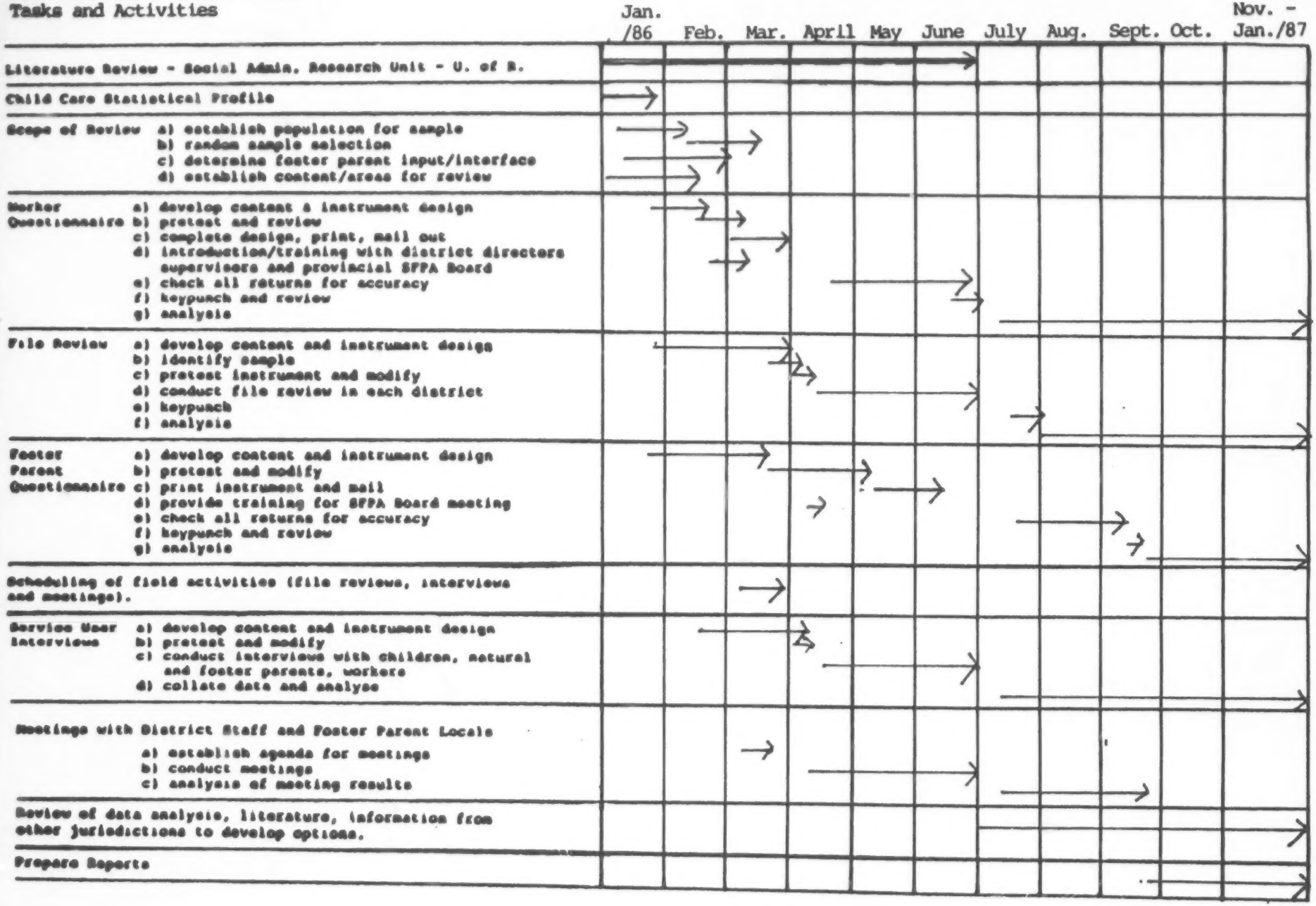
APPENDIX A

Child in Care Review Process
Tasks and Activities


Jan. /86
Feb.
Mar.
April
May
June
July
Aug.
Sept.
Oct.
Nov. - Jan./87
Literature Review - Social Admin. Research Unit - U. of R.
Child Care Statistical Profile
Scope of Review
a) establish population for sample
b) random sample selection
c) determine foster parent input/interface
d) establish content/areas for review
Worker Questionnaire
a) develop content & instrument design
b) pretest and review
c) complete design, print, mail out
d) introduction/training with district directors supervisors and provincial SFPA Board
e) check all returns for accuracy
f) keypunch and review
g) analysis
File Review
a) develop content and instrument design
b) identify sample
c) pretest instrument and modify
d) conduct file review in each district
e) keypunch
f) analysis
Foster Parent Questionnaire
a) develop content and instrument design
b) pretest and modify
c) print instrument and mail
d) provide training for SFPA Board meeting
e) check all returns for accuracy
f) keypunch and review
g) analysis
Scheduling of field activities (file reviews, interviews and meetings).
Service User Interviews
a) develop content and instrument design
b) pretest and modify
c) conduct interviews with children, natural and foster parents, workers
d) collate data and analyse
Meetings with District Staff and Foster Parent Locals
a) establish agenda for meetings
b) conduct meetings
c) analysis of meeting results
Review of data analysis, literature, information from other jurisdictions to develop options.
Prepare Reports

APPENDIX B

CHILDREN'S SPECIAL NEEDS

This table catalogues the number of children experiencing some degree of difficulty (mild, moderate or major) in each of the problem areas listed, by age group, and the percentage this represents in relation to the number of children in the sample, in that age group.

	0 - 5 years 164 children		6 - 11 years 184 children		12 - 15 years 245 children		16 & 17 years 100 children	
	# with problems	% of age group	# with problems	% of age group	# with problems	% of age group	# with problems	% of age group
Visual Impairment	11	7	21	11	41	17	10	10
Speech Impairment	27	16	35	19	25	10	8	8
Hearing Impairment	12	7	15	8	11	5	4	4
Congenital Condition	28	17	24	13	15	6	12	12
Serious Injury Resulting in Permanent Damage	2	1	3	2	8	3	1	1
Chronic Illness	12	7	11	6	16	7	4	4
Diagnosed Psychiatric Difficulty	1	.5	6	3	6	2	5	5
Retardation	15	9	32	17	28	11	10	10
Diagnosed Fetal Alcohol Syndrome	15	9	14	8	2	.8	2	2
Hyperactivity	11	7	30	16	15	6	5	5
Victim of Physical Abuse	13	8	24	13	30	12	9	9
Victim of Sexual Abuse	5	3	24	13	31	13	15	15
Alcohol Abuse	1	.5	1	.5	29	12	15	15

	0 - 5 years 164 children		6 - 11 years 184 children		12 - 15 years 245 children		16 & 17 years 100 children	
	# with problems	% of age group	# with problems	% of age group	# with problems	% of age group	# with problems	% of age group
Other Substance Abuse	1	.5	2	1	18	7	13	13
Deliquencies	1	.5	8	4	44	18	16	16
Problems Related to Sexuality	8	5	18	10	39	16	17	17
Bedwetting	23	14	36	20	18	7	4	4
Suicidal Tendencies	1	.5	2	1	16	6	8	8
Depression	5	3	18	10	44	18	16	16
Environmental Deprivation	23	14	27	15	35	14	12	12
Self-Esteem	15	9	58	32	118	48	33	33
Learning Disabilities	26	16	56	30	71	29	22	22
Life Skills/Vocational	1	.5	17	9	58	24	36	36
Running	0	0	12	7	42	17	16	16
Cultural/Language Difficulties	8	5	12	7	32	13	9	9
Violent/Aggressive/ Destructive Behavior	16	10	38	21	43	18	16	16
Other	33	20	30	16	51	21	14	14

A P P E N D I X

"C"

FOSTER PARENT RESPONSES REGARDING
SUFFICIENCY OF INFORMATION PROVIDED AT THE
TIME OF CHILD PLACEMENT

	Number of Respondents	Responses			
		Always	Usually	Some-times	Never
eason for Child's Placement	418	65%	23%	10%	2%
hild's Date of Birth	421	67%	20%	10%	4%
Child's Health Care	417	65%	22%	10%	4%
istory of Medical Needs (such as allergy and current medications)	406	39%	22%	23%	15%
nformation About Special Problems or Needs of the Child	412	38%	24%	29%	9%
nformation on the Child's Case Plan	403	35%	26%	28%	11%
nformation on the Child's School Performance (if applicable)	316	36%	27%	22%	15%
nformation on the Child's Family (such as number of siblings)	403	39%	27%	23%	11%
nformation About Visiting Arrangements for Parents/Family	397	40%	30%	23%	7%

APPENDIX "D"

SAMPLE OF STAFF WORKLOADS

Spring, 1986

WORKER	CHILDREN IN CARE	FOSTER HOMES	CHILD PROTECTION	UNMARRIED PARENT	ADOPTION	YOA	OTHER
#1	44	5	7	--	--	--	Assistant Supervisor
#2	28	8	--	--	--	--	
#3	50	23	--	--	--	--	
#4	71	30	--	--	--	--	
#5	27	--	--	--	20	--	
#6	10	--	23	6	--	--	
#7	4	4	11	--	18	--	
#8	40	--	--	1	--	--	
#9*	23	5	--	1	--	--	
#10	40	10	--	--	--	--	
#11	9	4	16	4	--	14	
#12	4	--	30	--	--	--	
#13	24	--	14	--	--	--	
#14	16	--	--	22	1	--	
#15	36	17	14	3	33	--	
#16*	5	--	11	2	--	--	
#17	14	1	15	5	10	16	
#18	10	--	40	2	--	--	

* ½ time position

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A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Using a step-by-step approach to further the education of foster parents. this program encourages team training, improves parenting skills and determines communication patterns. The eight modules in the series consists of:

1 Working with Special Needs Children
1) Identify Types of Special Needs Children
2) Work with Handicapped Children
3) Work with Teenagers
4) Work with Ethnic Groups
5) Work with Neglected or Abused Children
6) Work with Sibling Groups

2 Using M.H.R. Policies, Procedures, and Practices
1) Identify Organizational Components of B.C. F.F.P.A. and Ministry of Human Resources (M.H.R.)
2) Identify Role Relationships between District Supervisor, Social Worker, Foster Parents
3) Identify Responsibilities of Foster Parents to the M.H.R.
4) Identify M.H.R. Foster Care Planning and Implementation Processes
5) Identify Financial Entitlements for Foster Parents and Children

3 Working with the Foster Child's Family System
1) Identify Ideal Functions of the Family System
2) Identify Characteristics of (Nurturing) Relationships
3) Work with the Natural Family

4 Using Parenting Skills
1) Identify Phases of Child Growth and Development
2) Manage the Separation Process
3) Use Principles of Effective Discipline
4) Identify Principles of Behaviour Management
5) Use Principles of Health and Nutrition

5 Using Communication Skills
1) Identify Communication Skills
2) Conduct Effective Meetings
3) Write Reports
4) Negotiate Contracts

6 Becoming Self-Aware
1) Identify Personal Values
2) Identify Personal Needs as Foster Parents
3) Identify Network Feedback
4) Manage Stress

7 Using Ethics
1) Identify Ethics
2) Act Ethically
3) Plan Professional Development
4) Promote Fostering

8 Interacting with Community Agencies
1) Locate Sections of Family and Child Services Act
2) Identify Legal Rights of Foster Child, Natural Parent, M.H.R., and Foster Parent
3) Select Community Agency-based Programs

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VANCOUVER, B.C.
V6A 4N6

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE INQUIRE